

THE
LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1160.—VOL. XLV.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 25, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"YOUR FACE IS LIKE TEN HUNDRED OF OTHER GIRLS' FACES—NOTHING TO CREATE A REMARK ON."

A PLAIN GIRL.

—:—

CHAPTER I.

"MISS DENNIS, if you and Miss Burke do not stop talking this instant I shall give you each fifty lines to write out before tea."

Thus our by no means popular English governess, in her very shrillest key.

I am Miss Dennis, one of the culprits alluded to; I am also one of the "big girls" at Madame Davenre's select establishment for the education of young ladies. I am nearly seventeen, and I am not a young person to be trifled with.

So I toss my head as I become scarlet with indignation at this public rebuke, and throw a glance of defiance over my left shoulder right into Miss Fenn's gooseberry-coloured eyes—a look that cost me fifty lines and a very inky pair of fingers; but nothing is to be had for nothing in this world.

Mary Burke, my cousin, had talked double as much as I had done—in short, she always did; but as I wrote out my task she lolled in

Madame's own special armchair in the schoolroom, and devoured a yellow contraband novel she had produced from her pocket, for this was the hour of recreation, and every one was at liberty to spend the time as they pleased.

It was June—a lovely June afternoon—and almost all my schoolfellows were to be found strolling about the grounds in twos and threes, or standing here and there in little groups discussing the approaching breaking-up, their new dresses, who was to have the different prizes, and who was not. Strange to say their surmises were generally quite wrong.

I nibbled the end of my pen and stared out regretfully through the open window. I had only myself to thank for my enforced seclusion.

Many a time and oft had I to reap the unpleasant consequences of some rash word or look, for I was hot-tempered, impulsive, and reckless, being half Irish. My mother was a Burke, sister to Mary father's.

Half Irish I am, but I had never seen that gem of the Western Ocean; nor do I speak with the faintest suspicion of a brogue, in

which I differ from my cousin Mary, who was as it were caught wild, and sent over to be tamed and humanised by Madame Davenre about three terms previously.

Mary has certainly acquired a certain polish, such as it is. She no longer descends the stairs by gaily sliding down with both hands on the banisters, nor does she burst into a room as if a mad dog was after her, neither does she now whistle and say "Shure, an' I will," or "It's illigant," &c.; but her brogue is as rampant, her e's as rolling, and her hair nearly as wild as ever.

She talks incessantly—hers is the last tongue silent at night, the first to bestir itself in the morning.

She tells us great histories of "our place at home," "our carriages and horses," "our ten servants, our society, our family, our ancestors, and even our Banshee."

She talks with such steady volubility on these subjects (and we all listen slightly awed, I less than the others, feeling a certain proud share in the whole connection, Banshee inclusive) that to an outsider at a little distance it sounds exactly as if she was reading aloud.

Mary has a father and mother, two sisters and a brother.

Neither of her sisters would consent to be "finished" in England, and Mary evidently looked forward to the sensation that her new manners and accomplishments would make upon not only her family, but the whole entire neighbourhood when she finally returned home for what is called "good," but, as occasionally happens, for "bad."

I have wandered a long way from myself and my fifty lines, and before going further it would be as well to mention that my name is Ellen—generally Nellie—Dennis. I am an orphan, and spend all my holidays with my grandmother in London. She lives there almost all the year round, and her house in Park-lane is the only home that I can remember.

"There, thank goodness, that is done at last," I cried, closing a book with a loud bang, and turning round on the edge of the form. "It's scandalous we elder girls being kept in order just as if we were in the little school-room, and never allowed to open our lips," I continued.

"Yes; one quite forgets the sound of one's own voice," returned Molly, now also closing her book. "However, in another fortnight Madame will have seen the last of me. I go home, and not only that, but I shall come out."

"And quite time you did," I reply. "You are eighteen, and you look fully two-and-twenty."

"Nonsense!" rather sharply, "you say that out of spite because old Granny Dennis is going to keep you on here another year; and you would give your two eyes out of your head if your cage door was going to be opened too. Oh!" clasping her hands in sudden ecstasy, "my, won't I have fun, and won't I cut out Nannie and Maggie; but I'm not so sure about Maggie, she is pretty, and men like her; she does not care what she says."

Here I would have asked the meaning of this (to me) dark saying, but Mary hurried off.

"She has no accomplishments, to be sure, like me or you."

I was not at all flattered by being thus taken into partnership.

"I can paint, and I can sing four songs, and dance. Oh! won't they be mad when they see me dance the new waltz. They don't know it themselves, and I won't teach them; catch me! I shall come out at Lord Dun-dalk's ball. He gives one every autumn, when they have lots of people there for the shooting; heaps of officers. I like officers, and I'm sure to get heaps of partners."

I was by no means so sanguine on this score. Mary was certainly no beauty in my eyes. She was stout, fat, too stout, with a waist like a pillow. She had a tolerable face, but her teeth were not good, and she showed them too liberally. Besides this she had very, very light eyebrows and eyelashes, which certainly were a good match for her hair, but gave her rather an indefinite, unfinished look. She had a loud laugh, and a loud voice and ways; and only that she was my own cousin, and that such a thing was impossible, I might have been inclined to think her a little vulgar.

She insisted on our relationship, and "on cousins being cousins" to an extent that amazed me. She borrowed my books, pocket-money, handkerchiefs, linen, and any of my garments that would fit her, and wore them not once, not a mere "lend of a loan," but constantly and steadily till she wore them out.

Why, will say the astute reader, did you not likewise prey upon her wardrobe—give her a Roland for an Oliver?

For the excellent reason that there was nothing to prey on, nothing I would or could be seen in. Her dresses were the terrible triumphs of some roadside Irish dressmaker, not even a villager; her hats and bonnets were the scorn of the whole establishment; her boots and gloves "too utterly awful;" but she little recked these deficiencies. She

wore my dresses, my hats, my jackets; luckily for me my boots and gloves would not fit her.

We shared the same room; being cousins Madame Daverne thought she was doing a wonderful kindness to the inexperienced, wild Irish girl in quartering on her one of her oldest pupils; but the wild Irish girl soon made herself completely at home with my belongings, and there was an ease and a "matter-of-course air" about her whole proceeding that took me so much aback at first that I could not speak, could not remonstrate, and afterwards it was too late, and, as Mary continually said, "we were nearly the same as sisters, and blood was thicker than water," and she did not know another sent on earth whose clothes she would have liked to wear but mine, not even Nannie's or Maggie's, which, if they emanated from the same artiste as her own, was more than likely.

However, in those days I was not nearly as sharp, or as far-seeing, and suspicious as I am now, and I was very much attached to Mary in my fashion, looked up to her, for her was the master-mind, and believed in her implicitly, although I was a class above her in the school, and a proficient in music, painting and languages; in short, one of Madame's "show" girls, whilst Mary came to me for help in sums, in composition, in translation, and looked upon my assistance as her positive right.

Certainly she worked hard and made the most of her time, but a year is too short a period to acquire anything but a mere veneer of accomplishment, and Mary's English was shameful. I heard her say once, with the utmost complacency, that "Mary Queen of Scots was one of the wives of Henry VIII," and her geography was on a par with her English history.

"I suppose you will come out next season in London?" she said, after an unusually long silence, gazing at her meditatively with her chin in her hand, "be presented at Court, and all that. I know your grannie intends you to marry some swell—mother said so—make no end of a match, but all the same I do not exactly see how you are going to do it." She paused, and then went on. "You won't have any money, and you have no looks worth mentioning. Your nose is too short, your face is too thin, and as for your eyes—"

"Well!" angrily, "what about my eyes?"

"They are not bad when one can see them, but they are always half shut, for you are always smiling and screwing them up so. It's cheerful, but it's not becoming, and I don't believe it can be lucky to be always laughing as you are."

"I am not always laughing—what is there to laugh at in this place?" I demanded, fiercely, still smarting with the recollection of my fifty lines.

"I'm sure I don't know, but you find plenty," she returned, with a shrug. "How I wish your grannie would have me on a visit, and give some nice dresses like yours, and let her maid do my hair, and dress me, and take me out, and all that!"

"She never goes to balls," I interrupted, "and Morris never dresses me or does my hair. She walks out with me in the park—that's all."

"And don't you go with the old lady in the carriage?"

"Never, except to church and the dentist's."

"Oh, that's bad. Then it's not all a bed of roses, my sweet Nellie. It must be very dull work walking out with Morris, eh? If I had your chances I'd make your grannie trot me out. I'd stick to her apron like a burr. It's a pity she hates all the Burkes, and never would hear of your having me for a day in passing through town, or you would see if I would not wind myself into her aged affections. "Bless me, there's the first tea bell. I know there will be grand spread to-night. Edith Long had a hamper from home—cakes, jam, and clotted cream. I mean to be very civil to Edith this evening," she added, with a laugh,

"in spite of the awful row we had yesterday about the ink on her French dictionary. Come along, we have only ten minutes; and the thoughts of all the nice things we were going to have has made me ravenously hungry."

So saying, my cousin Mary hurried up to our mutual bower, and proceeded to adorn herself in a cream cashmere, once my property, whose glory had (thanks to her partiality for the garment) long since departed.

CHAPTER II.

The holidays are over, and I do not regret them much. Six weeks of the London season in a bijou mansion in Park-lane sounds uncommonly well; but then, unluckily for me, I was not "out." I was only sixteen-and-a-half, and grandmamma, who was not the traditional kind, fond old lady of story books, but a fashionable, well-preserved elderly matron, who did not at all relish having a grown-up child, kept me well in the background with an iron hand.

She had never approved of her only son's marriage with a pretty, penniless, wild Irish girl. Her early death had transferred me to grannie's care; she could not well refuse me a home, but she took care that I saw it seldom and troubled her as little as possible. Grandmamma did not care for me—not indeed for anyone; not anything much excepting her Polish white poodle, and in a less degree for Morris, her maid. It was not her nature—her heart was like a hard kernel, it had no feeling; no great emotions of joy or grief had ever stirred her; consequently she had "worn" well—she had not had an opening for tracing such deep furrows on her face as might have been expected from her years. She was nearly seventy, as the Burkes said, but she really, in a becoming bonnet or cap, and with the light well behind her, did not look more than fifty. She wore her hair, which was now white, in coils—one over the other in a kind of fringe, and very well these white locks contrasted with her quick, but still most brilliant, black eyes; her teeth were lovely (the very best a dentist could furnish); her slight figure, perfect toilette, and witty tongue made Mrs. Le Marchant Dennis a popular feature at many a dinner and many a drawing-room.

She was as passionately fond of society as if she were one-and-twenty, and gave charming little dinners, crowded "at home" and dainty lunches; but I need not say that I never figured at any of them; indeed, I am sure that my existence was not known to many of grannie's gay friends. I occupied a kind of front attic, a very bald, bare-looking room, with mere slips of carpeting on the boards, and all the invalid furniture from three bed-rooms. I vibrated between this apartment and a small room at the back of the dining-room, where Morris refurbished her mistress' dresses and washed Muff, the poodle, and I took my meals.

Grannie never rose before eleven or twelve, lunched in her own dressing-room, and then went out, coming home to afternoon tea and to receive friends, and going out again, probably to dine or to a theatre, so I saw but little of her; sometimes for days we never met, or I would have a mere vision of a magnificent figure in black velvet and diamonds stepping downstairs to her brougham or her dinner.

Morris was my more immediate patroness—a very superior person in grandmamma's eyes, with a thin face, thin hair, and red nose. As she sat working, and I sat reading in the morning-room (so called), she often gave me a bird's-eye view of things in general, and of her own candid opinion of me and my prospects in particular. As, for instance, one evening as she sat stitching, and I, tired of reading, had risen up and stood putting back my tumbled hair before the mirror over the chimney-piece, she, after watching me carefully with her head on one side (I saw her in the mirror), said, very gently,

"Dear me, Miss Nellie, how tall you do grow—like a beanstalk. Your figure ain't bad. No, it's better than I expected, but your face—" and she paused expressively, leaving me to fill up the gap.

"Well,"—turning sharping round—"and pray what is the matter with my face?"

"Oh, nothing particular—that's just it. That's what your grandmamma keeps saying. It's just like ten hundred of other girls' faces—nothing to create a remark on, one way or the other."

"Well, is not that just what it ought to be?"

"No. You see, Miss Nellie, when you were a little girl you gave promise of growing up rare and pretty, and your grandmamma was full sure would marry you off in your first season to a lord at least, and now—now—"

"Well, and now?"

"Why, your complexion is nothing, and your nose is not what it ought to have been. You have nothing but your eyes and hair, and that's no use—I mean the hair. You have got so much, everyone says it's false—it might just as well be it, too."

"And my teeth also, I suppose," I added, displaying two rows of even ivory for my own satisfaction. "Well, it's not," giving my head a shake; "so grandmamma is disappointed that I am not a beauty. Is this what you mean?"

"Aye, that she is," slinking her head in a despondent manner. "And every holidays, instead of getting better—"

"I get worse. Never mind, Morris," I added consolingly, "maybe I have got an ugly fit on. I may grow out of it—who knows? If I wore a fringe, and had my gowns from Madame Eller. If I would not surprise you yet—"

To this suggestion Morris merely shook her head very sadly evidently; in her opinion my case was hopeless.

Now, I had never had a very high opinion of my own charms; I was never considered one of the "pretty girls" at school, and school is a place (at least mine was) where everyone found their level, and where one was made quite at home with plain speaking.

I was considered clever—thanks to which character I was always called upon to lend a helping hand with themes or sums—but my claims to beauty had never been so much as mentioned. All the same, I was not at all pleased to hear Morris thus discoursing so discouragingly on the subject of my appearance.

I elongated my neck, turned my head from side to side, so as to try and thus catch my profile to the best advantage, and then I spoke, surveying my own reflection.

"Candidly speaking, Morris, I know I am not much to look at now, although my hair and teeth and eyes are all first-rate of their kind, but if my complexion improves and my face fills out, I should not be a bit surprised if I turned out quite a beauty in the coming by-and-by."

"Lor! Miss Nellie!" she ejaculated, with a smile of toleration, "how you do talk. You are a funny young lady, and full of your jokes always."

"But this is no joke," I returned, now facing her with my hands behind me. "Do you imagine for one second that I would joke on such a serious matter as my own personal appearance? No, no! And, supposing I became a beautiful swan instead of an ugly duckling—you, of course, have read the story, Morris—what will Grammie do then, eh? Tell me that, if you please."

"Oif, she will marry you off next season easy. You could not be in better hands."

"But, supposing that I don't want to marry, what then? and I won't—won't—won't?"

"Oh, Miss Nellie! you know as that's nonsense—you must. You ain't got no choice. Your grandmamma has given you the best education and all that, and will get you all your dresses from her own dressmaker, and give you every advantage; but she don't reckon on keeping you. She don't like young

people about her, as you know. And she says to me only last week, 'This is terrible about Miss Dennis; I shall keep her at school another year.'"

"Another year!" I shrieked. "What do you mean, Morris? I'm to leave at Christmas."

"No, not now, miss; she wants to see how you will look in another year, and give you every chance, and then she will bring you out and give you a season here. And if nothing comes of that—" pausing, as usual.

"Yes, if nothing comes of that," I echoed, sharply.

"Why, she can't do more, miss, and—you'll not mention this—but she says she will send you off to your mother's people, and see what hand they can make of you. She will pay them, of course. But you know as she would never have a young person living with her permanent; you know it as well as I do, so just you make hay whilst the sun shines!" she concluded, in a tone of solemn warning, snapping off a thread as she spoke.

"I wish you would tell me one thing, Morris," I said, sitting down at the table, leaning my chin on my hands and looking at her gravely; "just one thing more. Why is grandmamma so queer?"

"Queer? What do you mean, miss?"

"She never speaks of father, who was her only son; she never mentions mother, except to say something cutting about scheming families and foolish marriages. What does it all mean? You might tell me. You see, I don't remember either father or mother. How could I remember her—she died when I was born. Grandmamma never speaks of him; no, nor anyone. Did—did—" lowering my voice, "he do anything?" I added, mysteriously.

"Great goodness! Miss Nellie!" cried Morris, with a violent start and a jerk of her head, that nearly capsized her work basket; "what ever in the world put such queer notions into your head this night. You are a rare strange young lady; first saying you'll grow up a beauty, and then—then talking such utter trash; it's well, it was only to me. And now it's time you had your supper, and I'll ring for the tray, for you know it's in bed at half-past nine you must be; nothing like early hours for the complexion," jerking the bell as she spoke.

Presently my frugal supper of bread-and-cheese and a glass of milk made its appearance, and I rapidly despatched it, and went away to my bower under the slates.

As I lay awake pondering over many things, and listening to the rolling of belated carriages up and down Park-lane, it suddenly occurred to me, in one sharp stinging recollection, that now I came to think over it, away from Morris's volatile tongue, she had never answered my question about my father, and she had become unusually red; what did it mean?

I had been told that he died suddenly on a passage to Australia, where he went for the benefit of his health, but nothing further had been divulged.

I dared not open the subject to grandmamma; honestly, I was a good deal afraid of grandmamma.

And it was odd that there was not one single likeness of her only child; her dead son; among all the countless pictures and photographs that adorned her charming boudoir and drawing-room in Park-lane.

There was some mystery about him I was certain, and I was quite old enough to raise the veil and know what strange story was connected with my father's past. Know it I would—I was quite resolved upon this—as I sat up suddenly in bed, and made a kind of mental vow that all my energies, which were a considerable force, should be employed in unravelling the reason of grandmother's icy silence on the subject of her only son.

I could not sleep (if who might have gained a medal among the seven sleepers). I lay awake hour after hour in a strange, most unusual excited frame of mind. I seemed to have

suddenly roused up some dormant ideas that would not be laid, to be standing on the threshold of another phase of my existence, to be passing from the schoolgirl, with her mind full of to-morrow's lessons (of a difficult German exercise, a tough question in fractions, a dry subject whereon to write a composition for our literary master), these things had occasionally kept me from sleep—nothing else.

Now it was different—a burning, penetrating idea was throbbing in my brain. I was no longer a schoolgirl, only anxious to maintain my reputation as one of the cleverest of Madame's pupils. No, no, nothing of the kind. I was a young woman with a purpose.

CHAPTER III.

WITH the purpose alluded to at the end of the last chapter still uppermost in my mind, I rose the next morning fully resolved to leave no stone unturned to solve the mystery. I threw out many hints to Morris during the morning; and turn the conversation as she would I always led it straight back to the history of my parents.

But Morris was too clever to allow any schoolgirl chit of sixteen thus to pump her. She doubled, and twisted, and dodged, and managed to avoid answering any leading questions in a manner that reflected the greatest credit upon her mental faculties.

I left off no wiser than I began. My "pa" and "ma," as she called them, were dead years upon years—why had I suddenly taken it into my head to worry about them. Thus she turned my newly-born filial interest. Best let them alone.

But this advice was not acceptable. As I had failed with Morris I made up my mind (oh! bold endeavour) to try grandmamma. I was returning to school in two days' time, there was not a moment to be lost. I had so few opportunities, too, of a tête-à-tête with her, and when I had I was generally too much awed to speak. But for once I was resolved (if I got the chance) to bring my courage to the sticking point, and fate did favour me.

I was desired to join her at afternoon tea, and to induce myself into my Sunday gown for the occasion, which I did, of course, and lost no time in presenting myself in the front drawing-room—a lovely apartment in my eyes, with rose-tinted half-covered blinds, banks of hot-house flowers in the windows and fire-place, soft, inviting plush and velvet chairs and couches, Persian rugs, old china, heaps of little tables and cabinets scattered with photos of grandmamma's friends, and the walls likewise covered with valuable pictures.

Imagine in the midst of this dream of a room my grandparent seated in a low chair near the tea-table, toying with a French novel and a paper-knife, posed in a most becoming light, and garbed in a lovely black satin "tea gown," smothered in Spanish lace, with a sweet little cap on the top of her white curls, diamonds in her ears, and big diamonds on her hands. Her hands were the oldest looking part of her—they were very wrinkled—but with her hands hidden grandmamma looked a handsome, hawk-eyed lady of fifty.

I admired her immensely—but the admiration was not mutual—as she gazed steadily at me through her gold lorgnette as I advanced. She put it down with one hand, offered me the other, and sighed an exceeding deep and bitter sigh—a sigh caused by my shortcomings in looks, of course.

"Dear me, Ellen! Where did you pick up such a way of prancing into a room? Can't you walk—walk like a lady?" she asked in an irritated tone.

I coloured. I did not like this kind of conversation, and I had been told at school that I walked well (and I had believed my kind informant).

I took a seat and cast down my eyes and said nothing, whilst grandmamma looked me over to see if she could find anything else on.

which to remark. She did, of course—my hair—my unlucky hair!

"How frightfully you do your hair, child! Your hair is like a great hemp-rope, and such an *ugly* colour, too—neither fair nor brown; the less seen of it the better. Can't you make your head look smaller?"

"I'll try, grandmamma," I said, meekly.

"I do wish you had *some* looks," pouring out the tea; "it's so very provoking for a girl who has nothing, no money, no prospects, to be so undeniably plain, and you ought not to be—querulously. Your mother was a beauty, not that I admired her—and look at me!"

I did. She was certainly an exceedingly handsome, well-preserved old person. Her nose was perfect, her hair was decided in its tint, I not like mine, that seemed unable to make up its mind between dark and light!

"You go back to school on Wednesday, Morris tells me?"

"Yes, grandmamma."

"You are to stay at least till Easter. I'm resolved on that. It would be absurd to remove you sooner!"

"Yes, grandmamma."

"Yes, grandmamma!" she mimicked. "Can't you think of something else to say, you truly bread-and-butter miss, but yes, grandmamma? Now do let me hear you originate one remark—one *original* remark—to show that your fourteen years most expensive schooling has not been thrown away! Come, now, say something; and do say something I've not heard before."

"Yes, I would."

Here was my opportunity, my courage permitting. My heart beat fearfully fast, and my cheeks felt scarlet, and I had great difficulty in finding my voice, but I did speak—I did utter an original remark. It was this,—

"Grandmamma, I should like to know if you have any picture of my father?"

Grandmamma paused with her cup half-way to her lips, set it down, and turned a livid face on me, as she said, in a curious voice,—

"Why?"

"Because I should like to see it! I should like to know what he was like. I should like to hear—if—I may—something about him," I stammered out.

"There is no picture of your father," she said, very sharply. "I am glad of it! Never name him to me, girl! He is your disgrace—and mine, too!"

"And why? What did he do?" I asked, with unusual boldness.

"Never ask! It is your unspeakable gain not to know what I know! Never seek to discover this as long as you live; indeed, seek or not, it is out of your power. But one word more; never—as long as you live on my charity—open this subject again. You will have serious reason to regret it if you do!"

Her manner was so stern, so hard, so cruel; her word so biting, her looks so hostile, that I felt chilled all over. I became pale, my lips quivered, but brought forth no sound, my eyes filled with tears.

At this awkward juncture the door opened, and a visitor now entered—a man—not young in my eyes then, but possibly five-and-thirty. There was no time to bustle me away. I was not allowed to meet visitors, so my grandparent made the best of circumstances.

She changed her countenance with the opening of the door, and was all smiles, surprise, and false teeth. At this moment I almost hated grandmamma.

She did not introduce me, spite of the new arrival's hard staring and futile endeavours to admit me into the conversation; and after he had had two cups of tea, and had talked of many persons unknown to me—even by name—but apparently mutual friends of his and grandmamma's, she said,—

"By-the-by, I have a letter to show you," beckoning to me to approach. "Tell Morris to bring down my little writing-case, and," she added, in a much lower key, "you need not come back."

I was not sorry for the permission to retire, for I had been nervously badgering my brains for some excuse for effecting my exit, which I now did—not at all in a very creditable manner.

What would Madame have said had she seen me nearly knock over a small taper, and bestow a most awkward and anything but graceful bow on grandmamma's visitor as I quitted the room?

CHAPTER IV.

I WAS not at all sorry to return to school and the companionship of my old friends, and plenty of hard work soon dispelled the strange ideas that I had been brooding over during the holidays.

I really had very little time for thought—for speculating on what my father could have done that he had disgraced not merely himself, but grandmamma and me? Why was she so hard, so worldly, so unfeeling, so unlike other people's relations?

"No doubt I shall find out some day," I said to myself, and with this salve I quieted my uneasy thoughts for the present, telling myself that I could do no good to anyone by neglecting my studies and giving myself up to dreamy speculations—time enough for that when I had left school. So you will perceive that I was rather a practical young person.

Time went on, and Christmas came round. At Christmas grandmamma had usually numbers of invitations to country houses, and she did not want me; and from a fleeting glance she had of me when I was suffering from a fearful cold in the head, her hopes of my being a credit to her in the way of looks sank lower than ever; consequently she was only too happy to snatch at any invitation that would take me out of her sight.

One of our schoolfellows had asked me down to Scotland, and grandmamma never hesitated an instant—made no prudent inquiries—but, figuratively, "jumped at the offer."

Theodosia Maxwell, known to her familiars as "Doosie," was a wild girl, with red hair, and a strong accent, full of high spirits and unflagging energy.

I did not know that these "spirits" in her had taken the form of excessive fastness in her sisters—that they were known, far and wide, as "capital fun" by men, and "those awful women" by the ladies.

I did know that Mr. Maxwell was a very rich manufacturer—a widower, with three daughters and one son (in the army), and as I had a good stock of high spirits of my own (when not under grandmamma's eye) I looked forward to my trip over the border with the keenest anticipation.

How cold it was on the journey! Loudly did Doosie demand fresh foot-warmers at every station. As we neared our destination the cold became intense, and I certainly looked my worst, and that was saying a good deal, as I stepped out on the platform at St. Enoch's station with feet and hands like ice, and a nose the colour of pickled cabbage.

Doosie was little better, even though she was a native and used to the climate. Another short railway journey, and we were at our journey's end. A neat brougham and horse awaited us at the station, and soon we were driving up a very short avenue to a very large hideous house.

It looked nearly new, though it had really been built about twenty-five years. It was a glaring, gaudy red, and all the windows had bright, blue Venetian blinds—this on a background of green evergreens, was too, too gaudy.

"Well, what do you think of Glenmere?" said Doosie, "Glenmere Castle, though there are no towers?"

"Oh, it's—it's very large," was all I could reply.

"Wait till you see the inside—it's magnificent; the whole drawing-room is done up in Stuart tartan satin—curtains and all. It

looks so well and so national, pa says. And here we are," she concluded, opening the door. "Well, MacTavick," to a raw-boned footman, "where are the young ladies? I hope you have got a good tea for us—we are starved! Come along, Nellie; they are sure to be in here."

Doosie pushed the door open, and we found ourselves in the presence of her two sisters and her aunt (their chaperone). They all three rushed at us with various loud exclamations, and a sound of kissing might be heard going on for fully two minutes.

They all three kissed me just as long and as heartily as Doosie herself, and then we were introduced.

"This is Jessie," said my schoolfellow, pointing to her eldest sister. "This is Bobbie," nodding at the other, "and that's Aunt Flora, but we never dream of calling her aunt, only Flora or Flo, and you are to do the same."

At this the lady indicated gave a loud harsh laugh like a kind of peacock's screech, and said,—

"To be sure she shall. I am game for any number of adopted nieces."

And then we all sat down, and every one, except me, began to talk at once, and I took off my hat and listened, and looked on.

The two Miss Maxwells were plain and rather inclined to be sandy. They had very small waists, huge "Zulu" fringes, and wore neat tailor-made dresses, with stick-up collars, white crossed over ties, gold pins, and waist-coats. They looked between the ages of twenty and twenty-five.

Aunt Flora was a very small woman, with a neat little trim figure, beautifully dressed in a dark red costume. She wore no fringes, and no man's collar or waistcoat; but there her difference between her and her nieces ended. She appeared to be in her manners just as young as any of them, and to my great astonishment her sentences were well spiced with slang, and her grammar was decidedly shaky.

"We did not expect you so soon," she said, "or we would have been looking out; but the fact is, we have been so busy talking over a rare bit of fun we are going to have we half forgot the time."

"And what's the fun to be?" said Doosie. "I hope Nellie and I can come in for it—goodness knows we want something to amuse us, just home from school, far more than you do, so let us have it at once."

"You are not 'out' you two," put in Bobbie, "so you can't go to balls, nor expect it!"

"Balls be bothered," rejoined her sister. "I shall make the pater give a hop at home. Now what's your fun?"

"It's not exactly fun; but Colin has two brother-officers coming down to stay—bachelors, of course. They arrive to-night, and we are going to take them to the county ball on Thursday."

"Oh," said Doosie, "is that all? I thought, perhaps, you were going to have theatricals, or something more in that line. Men in a house are an awful nuisance, especially strangers."

"These won't be. Colin says they are just our style, and one of them is a regular vision of beauty—a kind of 'look and die' hero."

"But rather a bear in his manners," put in Aunt Flora, with a "ha! ha!" all her own.

"Oh, never fear," returned Bobbie. "You'll see I'll soon tame him. I'll be bear leader! Recollect, girls," looking round as she spoke, "that I bespeak the bear for myself. No poaching. Trespassers will be prosecuted."

"I'm sure you are welcome to him, as far as I am concerned," said Aunt Flora, generously. "I never admire dark men," by which little speech I perceived that she evidently went shares in her nieces' admirers, and did not at all consider herself what is commonly called "on the shelf."

"We had all the work in the world to get the governor's leave for these two. He does

July 25, 1885.

THE LONDON READER.

293

ys. And
the door.
footman,
hope you
starved!
to be in

we found
o sisters
all three
mations,
rd going

ng and as
we were

olfellow,
This is
d that's
calling

are to do

nd harsh
ch, and

for any

ery one,
I took

in and
ad very
d wore
collars,
waist-
ages of

n, with
ssed in
ge, and
ere her
ended.
ust as
great
spiced

said,
ut the
over a
e half

Dosie.
—good-
use, us,
ou do,

ut in
expect

er. "I
Now

s two
ay —
ight,
ounty

ught,
icals,
in a
cially

ut our
on of

nt in

ou'll
der!
speak,
No

far
usly.
ittle
ent
t at
illed

get
does

not mind dozens in and out all day, but he hates men in the house. They don't study his little ways. They sit up all night smoking, and they won't come down to prayers, and they interrupt all his best stories—or yawn in his face—so he says, poor old dear."

"The bear will be sure to yawn, if not go to sleep. Why did Colin ask him?" said Doosie, irritably.

"Oh, because he is a good shot, and a good fellow, he says, and was keen on coming, and Colin likes him."

"Keen on coming! Then he must have heard of me?" said Bobbie, with a giggle. "Eh, what do you say, girls? And I have another piece of news for you, Doosie. The big house at Rutherglen is let for the shooting. Has been full all the season—a very jolly set. A Mr. Norton, wife and daughter—daughter pretty, but rather stuckupish, but the old bird's very friendly. Though not strictly speaking Vere de Vere, they always have the house crammed with men. We are going over there to a dance to-morrow. And now, enough. You two are starving. Come into the breakfast room; I ordered tea there. You can sit right down at the table and make a really good meal, and after that we must go up and adorn, to be in time for Colin and his company," said Bobbie at the top of her voice, (everyone here spoke at the top of their voice perhaps because the rooms were so large), as she led the way across the hall. "They will be here before we know where we are, and I'm just dying to see the bear—my bear, if you please."

"No one is going to dispute him with you. No one wants a *brute*," said Jessie, delighted at her own wit; "I'm going to try my *prentice hand* on the other."

"And pray what is to become of me?" said Aunt Flora, in a tone of affected anguish.

"Oh! you, Flo', you know that you always take our young men away from us. None has any mercy on you now, you awful little flirt!"

I was struck dumb—not to say half choked with a piece of bread and butter—to hear a niece address an elder, and an aunt, in this fashion: What would have been my fate had I dared to hint half as much to grandmamma? And there was no doubt that she much preferred the society of gentlemen to that of her own sex; for, in her way, she was a flirt, too! Glenmere had money written all over it in huge capital letters. The foot sank in soft carpets. Mirrors met one at every turn, full length. My room was the most luxurios I had ever occupied—not that this is paying much of a compliment. It contained a duchesse dressing-table, cheval glass, writing-table, couch, arm-chairs, a roomy wardrobe, and quantities of pictures and pretty things—all set-off by crimson and grey hangings, and furniture covered to correspond. My room opened out of Doosie's; so I had no need for a night-light, or fears of robbers or ghosts, and she kept her door between us wideopen, and harangued me at intervals during her toilet and mine.

"Wear your white Surah that you got for the breaking-up last summer, and I'll wear mine," she said. "You shall pass as my sister for once, and really, Nellie," now standing on the threshold, hair-brush in hand, "you see that up here among us you are quite a beauty. I was looking at you at tea to-night, and, upon my word, you beat Jessie and Bobbie into fits—not that that is saying much; and when you have a colour such as you have now—only I know you won't keep it—you look quite pretty, that is, for here. Of course, down at Richmond no one thought anything of you; and as for me, I was beneath contempt. You really look awfully nice. There—there is the first gong, so I must hurry. Come in and lace me, for I sent Smith away."

I responded to this invitation at once, for I was ready; and, as I laced Doosie, she gave me a kind-of key to the family, which I here pass on.

The governor was a very dear old party, and let them do what they liked, provided they attended prayers, and went twice to the U.P. (United Presbyterian) on Sunday.

Colin was awfully conceited, and tried to lord it over everyone; he had a horrid temper and a spotty complexion, and no end of side on.

Jessie was led all over the place by Bobbie and Flo, who did not care what thing they said or did as long as they had lots of fun—dancing, new dresses, and lots of men in tow.

Flo was their maternal aunt, and—no, not young, but—awfully kind and jolly. All the old frumps of the neighbourhood said she was fast, &c.; but what harm! They said the same of them all, and what harm! It was all nothing but spite, pure envy, hatred, and malice. And now there was the second song!

"Mercy on us! we must go, or there will be wigs on the green!"

And we went, Doosie putting on brooch and bracelets as we descended the stairs, and hurried headlong to the drawing-room door.

(To be continued.)

PROOF OF DEATH.—If most people are afraid of anything, it is of being buried alive. That cases do happen where it is very difficult even for the experienced physician to determine whether a person is really or but apparently dead, without his having recourse to means which, while they would at once settle the dispute, would place life, if it really still existed, in jeopardy, may be judged from the fact that the French Academy, some ten or fifteen years ago, offered a prize of forty thousand francs for the discovery of some means by which even the inexperienced may at once determine whether in a given case death had ensued or not. A physician obtained the prize. He had discovered the following well-known phenomenon: If the hand of the suspected person is held towards the candle or other artificial light, with the fingers stretched, and one touching the other, and one looks through the spaces between the fingers toward the light, there appears a scarlet red colour where the fingers touch each other, due to the still circulating fluid blood, as it shows itself through the transparent, not yet congested tissues; but when life is extinct this phenomenon at once ceases. The most extensive and thorough trials established the truth of this observation, and the prize was awarded to its discoverer.

ORANGE JELLY.—This jelly is too well known to need more than a passing mention; but everybody does not know how to prepare an orange for an invalid. If the fruit is peeled, separated into "pigs," and left even for an hour by the bedside of a sick person, the outer skin becomes dry and hard, and is most indigestible. It should be prepared thus: Pare the orange to the quick—that is, take off the skin entirely—and then cut it up separately, removing every particle of skin and every pip. Cut the flesh of the orange into small pieces that will not need to be divided before being put into the mouth. Take a small mould (or an ordinary jam pot does very well), and place as near together as possible in it the bits of orange; sprinkle a little sugar over them, then drain off all the juice that will have exuded during the process of cutting; melt a small quantity of isinglass, with sugar to taste, and mix with the juice, and, when quite dissolved, pour it over the orange and sugar in the jar, shake it gently and let it stand to get firm. When turned out each piece of the orange should have just a coating, but no more, of jelly, and this will preserve the fruit quite fresh for several days. It can stand with a teaspoon beside it on the table by the invalid's bed, and will be found most refreshing during the wakeful hours of the night. Of course, the sugar can be omitted in the case of some patients who are forbidden it, and if there be a tendency to over-sweetness in the fruit, lemon juice may be used with advantage.

SAVED BY LOVE.

—:-:

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"I HAVE only done my duty," Esme says tremulously, as she passes through the grand carved old hall, with its armoured men, like grim sentinels, ranged around as if to guard the threshold from danger.

"How strange," murmurs old Margaret, as she watches the tall graceful figure beside Warren, his arm linked in hers with all the trust of a child for a mother. "There is something very stately in her walk; it seems to me that I have known it before."

It is touching to see the sightless man, in the very prime of his life, so helpless and dependent upon a weak woman.

Esme is disguised by an old trick, but yet a very excellent one. A pair of violet-glass spectacles, which, combined with her hair being brushed plainly over her temples and braided under her ears, gives anyone the impression that she suffers either from sore ears or ill-shaped ones; in fact, she is quite transformed, with the aid, too, of her neat black gown and snowy French cap.

"What a reticent person your nurse is, Warren?" says his mother later on, when he has rested and she is chatting with him; "is she good-tempered, do you think?"

"Is she an angel, mother?" he replies, warmly, "such devotion as she has shown to a miserable sufferer, a stranger in a foreign land, is enough to satisfy me or you, I should think, as to her worth and amiability."

"My dear boy, I mean no offence. I only wondered at her shy, silent manner, that was all;" this deprecatingly. "I can never pay her gratitude all that she has done for you, for me."

"Mother, promise me you will welcome her to our home as a friend, not a paid hireling; it would comfort me to know you had a faithful woman like Nurse Adams if anything happened to me."

"As long as she chooses this home shall be hers, also my sincere friendship."

"That is right; I thank you," he says earnestly. "I have never known till now what a true, tender-hearted woman meant or her devotion and self-sacrifice, putting of course yourself out of the question. My experience has been a cruel one, as you know," this bitterly.

While the dowager is conversing with her returned prodigal Margaret is not idle, but bent upon a purpose.

"I'll ferret out about it all, that I will. I no more believe in her being a common nurse than I do in my being the Queen of England. There's something more than comes to the surface."

"Shall I order a nice cup of tea, nurse?" she asks insinuatingly, entering the handsome room placed at Esme's disposal, and peering at her curiously through her spectacles.

"No thanks, not now," replies Esme smiling in spite of herself, at the faithful old creature's puzzled looks.

"You are rather young to wear glasses. Why I never took to them till five years ago, and I'm old enough to be your grandmother I should think. Are your eyes weak?"

"If my eyes are yours are not," she said, jumping up and flinging them off impetuously, and throwing her arms around Margaret's neck, and kissing her affectionately.

"Well, sakes alive, the Lord be praised!" gasps the dame; "if you haven't taken me by surprise; and yet I had some suspicion, too, that you wasn't what you seemed."

"Now that I am here, dear old friend, acting as Warren's nurse, aren't you pleased. Is it not better than leaving him in the hands of strangers?"

"Why it's splendid; you are a jewel, a real noble lady, that I feel I could serve on my bended knees, that's what you are," and the tears well into her honest eyes, causing her glasses to become blurred. "Dread these, they

| July 25, 1885.

worry me," this as she wipes them with her spotless muslin apron.

"Not half as much as mine do, for you can see out of yours, and I can't out of mine," laughs Esme, merrily.

"What put it in your head to do this, my lady?"

"His terrible malady, Margaret, nothing else, for I would not have ventured near him otherwise. I thought that I should be safe, as he could not see me, but one day he taxed my nerves dreadfully, for I thought he had detected my voice. Oh, how my heart beat, for you must know he is obdurate against me still, and believes me awfully in the wrong."

"Obstinate, thick-headed boy; if he wasn't so ill I should get out of patience with him. He doesn't deserve you, he's not nearly good enough. The day will come when I shall tell him so too, offend or please."

"Listen!" interrupts Esme, "I want you to help me in a little plan. You know Warren will have to stay close to London to go through the operations. Well I mean to get him near my home at a friend's, who will gladly let me have her pretty house while she is travelling. I shall be there to administer to his comforts; then, if the surgeons are successful, which I pray Heaven they may be, my face and our child's shall be the first he will see. With restored eyesight will come light, the darkness will fall from him like black shadows, for then he will know me for what I am—not what he believed me, when I was a wilful, headstrong girl."

"It's the cleverest little plot I ever heard of," chuckles Margaret.

"I thought you would say so. Now caution is the word; mind you do your best to put Lady Croyland off the scent, or all would be spoilt," enjoins Esme sagely, replacing the disfiguring glasses cautiously. "Next week we start, so there is not long to wait, and I must be careful to keep up my character. You must say that I am not very well, and like to be alone when I am not with Warren. I fear being too much with his mother; she might see through my disguise."

"Catch a wensel asleep," returns the old lady, "leave it to me. I'll say you are a very cold kind of person, who objects to talking rough; never fear I'll manage. Why, I'd tell any white fib to bring you two together again."

"Of all the quiet, taciturn persons Mrs. Adams is one, Margaret," says the dowager one morning, when she pays her accustomed visit to the housekeeper's room to have her morning chat and give orders for the day.

"She's not very well, my lady—knocked up with staying up all night when the master was down with the fever. She'll be all right presently, I warrant."

"She is almost rude to me at times, answers me so shortly; yet I want to become friends because Warren is so attached to her. He does not believe anyone like her; she is perfection to him, poor boy!"

"Don't you trouble about her; she is all right, my lady. These nurses are funny people to deal with, I have heard, rather short tempers. I suppose they can't help being snappish to the outside world, to make up for their devotion and patience to their patients."

Lady Croyland gives a little sigh and takes herself off, certainly not impressed with the agreeability of nurses, her son's in particular.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"You know a nice quiet place, nurse, where I could stay and be near London?" says Warren, anxiously.

"Yes, my lord, where the chief sound you would hear would be the rustle of trees, the songs of birds, the coo of doves and pigeons."

"I should like a rural place like that, it would calm my mind. I was awfully miserable in that pent-up hole in Paris."

"Then I will write and have everything settled," she says, eagerly.

"Decidedly, waste no time. I am longing

so to commence the campaign. To see once more I would give half my remaining years. I crave for light and sunshine, for a glimpse of this world that I never fully appreciated till now."

It is arranged very cleverly by Margaret and Esme that she shall accompany the travellers to help Adams take care of the invalid.

He seems very contented and full of renewed hope, especially as he has cheery old Margaret with him, who constantly comforts him by loving words.

They have not been settled down long before little Esme is sent for from the rector's, whose wife has taken charge of her during her mother's absence, and is being drilled carefully as to her name.

"You tell me Esme, mamma, oftener than you do pet," argues the pretty mite, quaintly.

"I know that, my darling, but the poor gentleman does not like the name of Esme, so you must never tell him. You would make him cry and fret, and he is very sick; besides, he cannot see."

"I won't ever tell him," she says, opening wide her lustrous eyes; "I call my mamma tall me her pet, so that's all."

"Poor darling! It grieves me to ask her such a thing, but I dare not let him know yet it is his own child. He is too weak to bear such news, coupled with the oral operations—which are telling on his strength and nerves, she must win his love unknown to himself."

"So you are my new nurse, are you?" Lord Croyland says, as they sit in a little bower in the garden, the child on his knee, his eyes bandaged, his face very pale, but not so wan as it was a month back.

"Ees, I'm your aussit in the garden, but not when the doctors come, then Margery is your nuss."

"You are a dear little pet," he says, stroking the curly head fondly. "But that is not your real name, is it?"

"Mamma tells me her little pet, but I musin't tell my oder one."

"Why?" he asks, wonderingly.

"Toss mamma says I musn't; and so I musn't."

"What a funny little creature you are," he says, dreamily. "How I wish I could see you."

"Would you love me more than?" she asks, artlessly.

"I couldn't do that very well," he laughs, "but it would please me to look at you; besides, I could take you for walks, and buy you a pony, and teach you to ride. We would have no end of fun."

"Do see, please soon," she replies, nestling up close to him, and burying her wee face lovingly in his coat-sleeve.

"I have a little girl who must be about your age, I should think," he says, confidentially.

"Where is she?" demands Esme.

"I don't quite know," he replies, sadly.

"Tan't she tame and play with me?"

"No, little pet."

"Why?" she asks.

"Because I don't know where she is; besides, I have never seen her."

And a pang seized him as he thinks of his child.

"What a funny little girl to hide away from her papa!"

"Perhaps it's her papa who has hidden away from her," he says, gravely.

"I'd find you if you was my papa. I wouldn't care. If you couldn't see me I told you," for a hazy idea possesses her that the nice blind man has always been so, and that his little girl was a very naughty one to keep away from him.

Esme watches daily the ripening affection and tenderness displayed by Warren for his tiny companion, and ventures to hope much from the sweet communion of the innocent prattler, whose chief happiness is to be with Warren, to hold his hand, and lead him about with such an air of pride and self-importance.

There is joy in the little household, for the

doctors have at last give sanguine hope of the return of Warren's sight.

"I am so thankful, so overjoyed that I feel I could shout! Nurse, I could forgive even my most bitter enemy."

"Could you?" Esme says, softly. "I am very glad to hear that, because you will, no doubt, think less harshly of your wife."

"Don't, please," he says, his voice becoming hard and metallic; "I—I still feel her desecration severely. Would to Heaven she had been like you in nature—gentle and true."

"She was young, headstrong, perhaps. Why not be a little lenient, that is, if you ever loved her? Now is the golden opportunity, when you wish to return thanks for the mercy granted to you."

"She would deride, scorn me. You little know the nature of my wife," he says, gloomily.

"Is your love still as great, or has time and separation killed it?" she asks, tremulously.

"Neither time or separation could crush my love for her; would to Heaven it could. That is what wrings my heart, and inflicts such torture, and compels me to seek forgetfulness in excitement—anything to ease my troubles."

"Then you do still care for her?" she repeats, dreamily.

"She was my first and last love," he says, solemnly, "but as heartless as she was beautiful. She drove me wild. I became desperate, mad, ready to do or dare anything to drown my care, my eternal misery. Oblivion would not come to me try what I did. Oh! nurse, the catalogue of my misdeeds would harrow up your pure nature till you would despise so degraded a man. All my sufferings are the result of my recklessness."

"Why not let bygones be bygones," she urges, a tremor in her voice, "and take her to your heart?"

"You know not all the past miserable story," he groans. "There is a horrible mystery linked with her life previous to our marriage. Then there is another, which I could not even confide to you."

"Are your two lives to be divided for ever on mere suspicion?" she asks, gravely. "Suppose she came to you and proved that she was worthy of your love and respect?"

"She does not care for me sufficiently, or she would not desert me these long miserable years. No, nurse, I must bear my woes the best way I can. Nothing can change her hard nature. Even my child she has robbed me of."

While they are talking in low, agitated tones Margaret bursts into the room without knocking, saying, in a voice full of anguish,—

"Master Warren, I have just received a telegram from my lady. Oh, my poor stricken boy, we are all plunged in a sea of trouble; somebody has taken possession of your ancestral home for debt. Your dear mother is distracted. It will kill her. Oh! that sight could return to your poor eyes, something might then be done. Heaven help us, we are all ruined."

"Great heavens!" he groans. "Then the blow has come at last. I have been like a log lately, my very senses benumbed, frozen, or this might have been averted."

"Can nothing be done?" cries the unhappy Margaret. "Is the debt very large?"

"Between ten or fifteen thousand. If I could only get about I might pay these Jews off or arrange with them, but I am chained. I am fitly punished for my rash, mad folly."

Esme stands dazed, speechless; with the fearful intelligence; then summoning a great effort she gives an imploring gesture to the old lady not to question him more lest it should injure his chance of recovery.

"Let me think, my head is in a whirl," he pleads, in a piteous tone of agony. "I would that I could die rather than see my dear mother brought to this."

"The Lord comfort you, poor lad," said

his faithful old nurse. "I won't add to your trials," laying her wrinkled hand soothingly on his broad brow, on which lines of deep care have already set their mark.

"I will save the estates, Margaret, trust to me," said Esme, following her out of the room.

"You, dear lady?" she said, incredulously. "You aren't rich enough for that."

"I tell you I can manage it. Will you leave all to me?"

"What do you intend to do, dearie?"

"Start from here in less than half-an-hour for town. Once there I can procure the money."

"You mean it?" exclaimed the dame, in amazement.

"I tell you solemnly the money shall be raised. Now help me to get off like a good creature, and take care of Warren in my absence."

"What can I say about you when he asks for you?"

"Tell him I was called away upon some very important business, but will be back to-night."

Away tears Esme to catch the up-train for Waterloo, her heart beating madly; for time is everything, and she has very little to carry out her errand.

But she is brave and hopeful; for something whispers in her ear that all will be well yet, for Warren still loves her. In that sweet thought lies an intense feeling of joy, of rapture.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"A lady for me, Bred? Surely she has made some mistake."

"No, my lord; she gave her name as Lady Croyland."

"Show her in instantly," replied his master hastily.

"I am so glad to find you in," says Esme, taking the chair he offers. "I am in trouble, and want your advice and aid;" giving him a radiant smile as he holds her gloved hand in a warm, brotherly grasp.

"You know I am always at your service, he says, earnestly; "but before we begin to talk you must take some refreshment—either some coffee, or a glass of wine; you look fatigued."

"No, I couldn't touch a thing till I have told you my errand."

"Then tell me all now."

He listens patiently to the miserable tidings, then says,—

"I have never heard such a tale of a man's life in my life; he must be crazed to jeopardise his home for such a trifling sum. Really it makes me feel out of patience with him."

"But he is so sorry and repentant. I would stake my life on his turning over a new leaf when he returns to the world once more," she says, eagerly.

"I feel so savage with him," he growls. "I only redeemed the diamonds the other day, and I had made up my mind to place them round the neck of dear little Esme, and to seek her tiny arms and head, for you know they are your child's birthright."

"Yes, that is true, but her father's honour comes before baubles. I spurn such trifles when the Croyland estates hang in the balance."

"Twice, Esme, the Croyland diamonds have come to Warren's rescue, but the most priceless jewel is yourself. Fool, fool, that he is; why has he been so wilfully blind?"

"You will dispose of them for me to-day, now won't you?" she coaxes.

"Yes, if you are determined, I must give in. How much am I to raise on them?"

"What you can, twenty thousand if possible. As soon as affairs can be put straight your noble generosity shall be repaid. It cost you ten thousand to redeem them the other day. How can I ever thank you for all you have done for me?"

"It was for your sake alone, Esme. It cut me to the heart to see your jewels in the hands of

money-brokers, so that the moment I had a windfall I determined to restore them to you. I cannot express what pleasure it gave me to write that letter and say I was enabled to do so, and how they have to be sacrificed again. It is too bad. Altogether Croyland is a spendthrift, a —"

"Spare him, dear brother, for the sake of his sufferings. Even you would pity the mental anguish he was enduring when I came away," she says tremulously and tearfully.

It is needless to say she gained her point, and before night closes in she is on her way to Lord Croyland with the required money.

"Nurse," he says, querulously, when she enters the room, and in her low, gentle voice, which she is careful to assume, asks how he is. "I am ill now in mind, tortured beyond all I can say. Why did you leave me? were you too in trouble? Margaret said something about your being called away."

"Yes, my lord, I was in very great trouble."

"Is it averted? I mean is it conquered?"

"Yes, all is right now. I am thankful to say."

Presently a letter is brought in by Margaret.

"For me," he says, trembling violently, "some more bad news; will you read it, nurse? I may as well know my fate at once, suspense is worse than knowledge."

Esme read out a few lines to the following effect:—

"DEAR WARREN.—I have heard of your dire misfortunes and have enclosed notes for twenty thousand pounds to relieve you of your present liability and distress. Some day you may learn who I am; now I wish to simply subscribe myself as your true loyal friend."

"Surely I must be dreaming," he exclaims, in astonishment. "I know no one in the world who would render me such a service. Are you sure the letter is intended for me?"

"Quite certain, also that there are twenty thousand pounds in bank-notes. Feel them, they are crisp and genuine!" placing them in his hand.

"I know not whom I am indebted to," he says, tremulously; "but I pray that Heaven may reward their goodness to me. They have saved me from despair, my mother from probably her death. May all the blessings of a divine Providence bless my unknown friend."

What temptation comes over her to say,—

"Warren, I am the friend, I, your despised wife, whom you deemed worthless, who has nursed you back to life and light."

But she restrains herself, for the time has not arrived for the completion of her plot.

The next morning Margaret is despatched to Croylands with all necessary instructions, and Warren is once more somewhat easier in his mind. He is seated in his favourite seat in the garden when a voice arrests his attention, and springing up he says,—

"Who goes there? speak, I say." Great beads of perspiration start to his brow, and his hands clutch as if he were about to strike some bitter foe to the earth.

"It is I, Oscar Viche, Lord Croyland!" says a voice.

"Oh, why! oh! why am I afflicted with this accursed darkness? Where are you, come near me; let me be assured it is the man who foiled me when I thought the truth was within my grasp," and as he speaks, he holds out his hands in a piteous, groping fashion, while his face flushes and pales in turns with conflicting emotion.

"My visit is to effect that very purpose. You want the truth, you shall have it. It is a duty I owe to your wife, and has brought me many miles to reveal."

"How did you know where to find me?" demands Warren.

"I went to Croylands, and was told you were staying here."

"Oh! this eternal darkness," he groans; "to think I am at your mercy when you should be at mine—you, who perhaps will confess

something so horrible that my very soul will cry out for revenge."

"You are only torturing yourself needlessly, my lord," returns Viche, quietly; "my explanation to you may not be so black as you seem to fancy. It is a thousand pities you take things for granted from mere suspicion."

"Was it mere suspicion that I saw you leave my wife, and sneak stealthily away? How do you account for the letter I found, and then the bracelet, a precious heirloom of my family, which you dared to barter on a common gaming-table? Do you take me for a fool, or a dotard?" he says, wrathfully.

"I deny neither of your assertions. I freely acknowledge them to be perfectly true, and yet I can explain all to your satisfaction, even if you were the veritable Moor himself."

A harsh, mirthless, deriding laugh escapes Lord Croyland.

"Why, then, did you sneak off like a coward from Monaco?"

"I had my reasons then, they are changed now. Death has stepped in, and with it an intense desire to set matters straight for one who has lived with a fearful stigma overhanging her, raised by your insane jealousy and my burning thirst for revenge. Remember we Spaniards never forgive an injury; it grows with our growth, increases with our strength."

"What has your national vice to do with the subject?"

"Everything, my lord, as you will know if you listen patiently just a few minutes. It is ten years ago now since the events took place that I am about to relate. Captain Dorman put his ship in to Cadiz, and remained in our sunny land, accompanied by his wife and lovely daughter, who was then half-child, half-woman, a maiden so sweet in her budding beauty that she drove many of us impetuous sons of the South wild. I was one of the unfortunates who fell under her spell."

"You loved her—she reciprocated your passion?" gasps Warren, furiously.

"I only wish such had been the case, much evil might have been averted. Esme Dorman ridiculed, spurned my passion, laughed at it as if it were sport to trample on a heart."

"Then she never yielded to your supplications?" puts in Lord Croyland, excitedly.

"Heaven knows whether I might not have prevailed at last—that I cannot say; but a horrible catastrophe occurred, one that dashed all hope from my heart, and made me almost hate the name of Dorman. Esme's mother was a woman of my own race, a Spaniard, and a most violent, jealous nature, suspicious of every pretty woman who dared even to smile at her Saxon husband, whom she loved with a fierce, tigerish love that at times became a misery to him. I had a very beautiful sister, and she, unfortunately, conceived a liking for the brave *débonnaire* sailor. He admired her as any man does a pretty woman who shows a *penchant* for his society. He was fond of music, and together they would sing and chat while I was trying to win a smile from Esme; but, alas! our day-dreams were suddenly stopped by the frenzied jealousy of Mrs. Dorman, who accused my sister of robbing her of the affection of her husband. Recriminations were hurled freely on both sides, for my sister was fiery too; besides, she poor girl, was innocent if imprudent, and in a spirit of rivalry and defiance still persisted in seeking the captain's society. But she never dreamt the nature she had to cope with, and one fatal day she fell a victim to her own rashness."

"What mean you?" cries Warren, thoroughly roused now to fever pitch.

"That Esme's mother, in a fit of jealous rage, murdered my sister!"

(To be continued.)

LIFE'S HARMONY must have its discords; but as in music pathos is tempered into pleasure, by the pervading spirit of beauty, so are all life's sounds tempered by love.

THE
MISTRESS OF LYNWOOD.

—
CHAPTER L.—(continued.)

It is two years and eight months later, and the May sunshine is falling on Lynwood Hall—on its "terraced walks, its blossoming trees, its velvet smooth lawns, and on its young mistress, who is seated on a rustic bench, under the shadow of a huge walnut tree, watching her little son Ralph, as he plays at her feet.

These two years have changed Adrienne. In the place of the sweet, laughing girl, there is the gentle, thoughtful woman, lovely as of yore, but with something in her face that it formerly lacked—something that *motherhood* has brought.

Many changes have taken place at Lynwood, too, since the night when its master was seized with the second stroke of paralysis, from whose effects he never thoroughly recovered. He lost the use of his limbs, and had to be wheeled about in a chair, constructed on purpose, but his faculties remained as clear as ever, and, thanks to the devotion of his wife, he was hardly permitted to remember his infirmity.

Her tenderness never faltered, her care never tired, and with an absolute self-negation she gave herself up entirely to the task of making life as bright for him as it could be made.

By-and-by the joy bells rang out merrily in honour of the birth of an heir to Lynwood, and Sir Ralph, as his son was lifted up for him to kiss, murmured,—

"Now I can die in peace!"

But the summons had not come for him yet, and he lingered on into the summer time, and when autumn leaves were falling passed peacefully away, his head pillow'd on his wife's bosom, and her name the last sound that escaped his lips.

And so Adrienne was left mistress of Lynwood until her son, the baby Sir Ralph, should grow up, and inherit his father's estates.

Changes have also befallen the other characters whose history we have followed for so long; and in order to explain them we must go back to the date of Nathalie Egerton's release from prison.

There was no difficulty in proving her entire innocence of Farquhar's death, and so she was released, while Joyce Weston was committed to take her trial for wilful murder, and at the next assizes was found guilty, and condemned to death, but with a recommendation to mercy, on account of the ill-treatment she had received at the hands of the banker.

Nathalie Egerton interested herself strongly on behalf of the unhappy woman, and partly through her instrumentality the capital sentence was remitted to one of penal servitude for twenty years.

Joyce received the intelligence of her respite with the same stolid indifference with which she had listened to the judge, when, assuming the black cap, he had sentenced her to be hung; but she was a little moved when she heard of Nathalie's exertions, and said, slowly,—

"I think she is a good woman, and I hope she will be happy."

The hope was destined to be fulfilled, for no girl in England could have looked and felt more radiant than beautiful Nathalie, as she stood before the altar in bridal robes, crowned with orange blossoms, and gazing up at the man at her side, with perfect love shining in her luminous eyes as they met his.

And Cleveland swore to himself that never should word or act of his dim the brightness of that devotion—an oath easy enough of fulfilment, for their love had been purified in the "cleansing fires" of affliction, and had come out all the nobler and deeper for the test.

No one had attempted to say a word against their marriage, and all Mr. Egerton's dreams

of a "grand match" for his daughter were effectually swept away by the lesson Farquhar's death had taught him. Besides, Nathalie herself was an heiress now, for she would have part of the money Lionel had discovered in the subterranean passage, and therefore there was no necessity for her having a rich husband.

Lionel only waited for the consummation of his sister's marriage, and then bade "good-bye" to King's Dene, and joined an exploring party to the depths of Africa, where he distinguished himself by his intrepid daring, and a reckless disregard of danger that almost amounted to foolhardiness. He had intended staying there for some years, but illness forced him to return to Europe, and being so near home he had come on to King's Dene, where Nathalie and her husband were staying on a visit to the Squire.

It was of him Adrienne was thinking as she sat under the tremulous shadows of the leaves and watched her boy. He had not been to see her yet, and she was wondering whether he was much altered, and whether he would be the same kind friend he had been in the past.

Suddenly she started up from her seat, for she saw him coming across the lawn—browner than of old, in spite of his recent illness, but with the same easy grace in his carriage, the same bold, fearless eyes and noble mien that had made her christen him "Lancelot."

He took her hand and held it, and for a moment neither spoke, but the hearts of both were stirred with an emotion to which they had long been strangers; and while Adrienne's eyes were full of tears his lips trembled so greatly that he put up his hand to hide them.

"You are glad to see me?" he said, at length.

"Very, very glad—how glad I can hardly tell you."

Then his eyes fell on the child, and he picked him up in his arms and kissed him.

"This is your little son?"

"Yes. Is he not a noble boy?" with maternal love shining in her eyes, and making itself felt in the tones of her voice.

He acquiesced, and at that moment the nurse came to take the little heir away, and Adrienne and Lionel were left alone.

"Are you glad to get back home again?" she asked, playing with a flower in the old way he remembered so well.

"For some reasons I am very glad. I was glad to see my father and Nathalie—"

"Does not she look well?" interrupting.

"Yes. I believe she is very happy, and her husband is getting on splendidly in his profession. He will be an R.A. before long, I expect. You did not let me complete my last sentence," he added; "I was going to say I was glad to see you."

A faint flush drifted into her cheek.

"Then you had not forgotten me amongst all the fresh scenes you have visited?"

"Forgotten you! No. I could as soon forget my own identity. You have been an ever-present memory that has haunted me sleeping or waking. You believe me, Adrienne?"

"Oh! yes," she said, quickly; "I could not doubt anything you told me."

"And you have thought of me occasionally?"

"Very, very often."

He took her hand and held it in spite of the slight effort she made to draw it away.

"While I have been abroad—at least for the last twelve months—I have been haunted by the vision of a possibility so sweet that it seemed to me too good ever to be realised." he went on, his voice very low and earnest. "I could not do anything, or say anything without thinking of it, although, at first, I tried to resist it; but when an opportunity occurred for coming home I embraced it very eagerly on the plea of illness, for I resolved to put my fate to the touch, and consummate either my happiness or my misery. Adrienne, can you guess what I mean?"

She did not reply, but the sensitive colour

was flying backwards and forwards in her face, and her hand trembled in his.

"It is, that I love you—have loved you for years. Yes, even when it was a sin to do so, and it was for that reason I went away, thinking I might never see you again. But it is no sin now; and do you know, Adrienne, I think Sir Ralph himself, if he could speak, would tell me to try and win you, for he placed your happiness above every other consideration, and I know I could secure it if you were my wife."

"Yes," she answered, slowly; "before he died he told me that it was his wish I should marry again, and he said he would rather you were my husband than any other man."

"And you," cried Lionel, "what do you say?"

She turned her lovely eyes full upon him.

"I think I must have loved you always," she replied, simply. "I did not know it then, but it seems to me now that I had grown to look upon you as the best part of my life."

And Lionel took her in his arms and pressed his first kiss on her lips.

Our story has drawn to a close. Of the other characters there is little to tell. Isabel Farquhar is still unmarried, but leads a brilliant society life in London, where she is much admired, and feted, and caressed, and has every opportunity of making a splendid match when it pleases her to resign her liberty, which she declares, she has no intention of doing.

Otho Lynwood is somewhere on the Continent—a needy adventurer, who trades on his good looks and the traditions of his name, but every day he falls lower and lower in the social scale, and Adrienne, is, indeed, amply avenged for the wrong he would have done her.

Lucy Weston finally married her cousin Joe, and they have adopted Joyce's child as their own. They are very happy in their humble way, the one cloud on the horizon being the remembrance of her who was once the pride and beauty of the family, but who is now working out her sentence, and, let us hope, repenting her sins.

That Otho was answerable for closing the door of the subterranean passage was never positively known, although Lionel's suspicions were naturally strengthened by the events following his release. However, he never mentioned them to anyone but Adrienne, and the matter is still spoken of in W—shire as being shrouded in obscurity.

Of the happiness of Adrienne, and Lionel, and Nathalie, and her artist-husband it is unnecessary to speak.

The two latter live in London, where Hugh works hard, and is inspired to great achievements by his beautiful wife, who is very ambitious on his behalf, and has never regretted the day on which she laid down the name for the sake of whose honour she risked so much.

Adrienne prefers living in the country, and only going to town occasionally; and Lionel finds his time pretty well taken up with the responsibilities of his position as one of the leading gentlemen in the county; for the Squire, now that all the mortgages are paid off, is quite content to leave the management of King's Dene in his hands; and besides this he has to look after the Lynwood property on behalf of the young heir, now grown into a fine boy, dividing his mother's love with a tiny baby sister, who has just arrived.

They spend part of the year at King's Dene and the other part at the Hall, for until her boy comes of age Adrienne is "Mistress of Lynwood."

And so we leave them, happy with the happiness of—

"A perfect love in a perfect life."

[THE END.]

THE rose has its thorns; and beauty is never found without one or more. They may be blunted at the points, but cannot be extirpated without killing the tree.

July 25, 1885.

THE LONDON READER.

297

THE RIGHT TO LOCK THE DOOR.

I MIND me of a joy that seemed
Supremely sweet and good,
When I had reached the border-land
Of early womanhood,
A place was given to me where—
I might my treasures store—
A closet ample for my needs,
With a lock upon the door.

I hung my clothes upon the pegs,
And spread out on each shelf
My books and boxes here and there,
As it might please myself.
It was a nice, convenient nook
From ceiling down to floor;
But the nicest thing about it was
The lock upon the door.

For, I confess, that brother Jack
And sister Angeline
Were not particular to keep
The law of "mine and thine,"
And oft would rummage through the shelves,
And hidden nooks explore,
Alas! alas! if there had been
No lock upon the door.

With what content I used to stow
My pretty things away,
And then return to look at them
A dozen times a day!
No other corner of the house
Was half so dear to me
As this convenient cabinet
For which I held the key.

Oh, the delight of ownership!
Oh, the ecstatic joy
That fills the cup of happiness
For every girl and boy,
When some dominion they obtain,
A den, if nothing more,
To call their own, and claim alone
The right to lock the door!

CAN YOU BLAME HER?

CHAPTER IV.

LORD AND LADY NORMAN were delighted—nothing could have pleased them better than Hyacinth's submission. They knew if she did not all that her simple assent had meant, henceforward no worry or anxiety would assail the Earl. He had John Carlyle's word that so long as he lived he should be Norman of Normanhurst; his only child would be the richest lady in the county, and have a husband who fairly worshipped her. What more could her parents desire?

Ah! if they could only have seen into the secret of the girlish heart! If they could only have followed Hyacinth upstairs after the "good-nights" had been exchanged, and she was free to seek solitude!

The poor girl entered her own room, closed the door, and threw herself on the bed with an expression of agony on her face pitiful to behold.

"Oh! my darling! my darling!" she moaned, "it was for your sake. Oh! Father in Heaven, if I have erred, pardon me; it was for his sake!"

For whose? Not the soldier lover who lay sleeping beneath an African sun—not the noble father who had given her so little fatherly affection! For whose sake, then?

With one hand Hyacinth unfastened her dress, and taking hold of a slender gold chain, drew from its resting-place near her heart a locket containing a portrait and a lock of dark hair. She gazed on these memorials as one who could not gaze enough; she pressed the lips passionately to the pictured face.

"I do not forget thee!" she murmured. "Ah! Heaven! I never can forget thee! But I am in a sore strait, my darling! Sir John Carlyle is a generous man, and so I have promised to be his wife."

She shivered in the sweet September night—so wrapt was she in her own sad thoughts that she never heard a modest tap at the door. It was repeated, and again no answer came; then someone gently turned the handle and entered. It was Miss Johnson. She exclaimed at seeing Hyacinthe still in her evening dress, the flowers yet in her soft hair,

"My dear," she said, gently, "is this wise or prudent? You will be ill again."

"It doesn't matter; nothing matters now."

"Hush, my dear, what can you mean?"

"I have done it!" said Hyacinth, in her far-off weary voice, "I have done it! I am going to be the wife of a millionaire. I shall be the richest lady in the county—and I am wretched."

The governess stooped and kissed her. Her very heart bled for Hyacinth, and yet she was glad of the news she had just heard.

"He is a warm-hearted man," she said, slowly, "I feel sure Sir John will make you happy."

"I shall never be happy again."

Miss Johnson sighed.

"Happier than you would be here, I should have said, my dear."

Hyacinth shuddered.

"If I could only tell him," she said, faintly. "If I could only tell him my miserable story, I should not mind so much; but to go to him with this burden at my heart—to have a secret I must hide for ever—it almost drives me mad."

"You must not tell him; the risk would be too great. Hyacinth, be sensible; think of—"

"I do," said the girl, plaintively. "I think of nothing else. I shall have the loveliest jewels in the county, the richest husband; and yet doesn't it seem strange, dear, I think of nothing but Sand's End and the little cottage."

"When are you to be married?"

"Soon. I am sure from his manner Sir John will not brook delay. I dare say it will be—before Christmas."

There was nothing to be said; nothing could alter the facts. Hyacinth had promised to marry Sir John Carlyle, and there was no love for him in her heart. He was a very devoted lover.

Early the next morning he arrived at Normanhurst. He was shown straight to the morning-room, where Hyacinth sat at work.

He went up to her and took her in his arms, and she had much ado not to shudder as he pressed hot kisses on her brow and lips.

"My own at last!" he murmured. "Hyacinth, do you know you have been very cruel to me?"

"I did not mean to be."

"But you will make amends. You have kept me a long time waiting for my fiancee. You will not keep me waiting for my wife?"

"I don't want to be married."

Sir John looked troubled.

"My dear girl," he said, with just a touch of authority in his voice, "you have promised to be my wife. I know you don't love me; but I believe I can teach you to. I shall have a better chance of success when once you are my wife."

She looked at him with a strange shadow over her beautiful eyes.

"I wonder why you love me!" she said at last. "You know absolutely nothing about me. You have seen me three times. I might be the wickedest creature in the world for aught you know."

Sir John smiled.

"I am not afraid of making any alarming discoveries, Hyacinth. Now, my dear, be sensible, and let us fix our wedding-day."

"June is a nice time," said Hyacinth, assentingly. "Shall we say in June?"

"Certainly not; you don't suppose I am

going to wait all that time! This is September. Let us say in two months' time."

But Hyacinth refused.

"Nothing would persuade me to be married in November," she said, decidedly; "it is a hateful month."

"October then. I shall be the gainer for your prejudice, since it will give you to me sooner."

Hyacinth protested; but her voice was overruled, and the twenty-eighth of October fixed for the day which should make her Lady Carlyle.

"Eight weeks!" commented Sir John. "It seems a long time."

Hyacinth smiled.

"Lady Norman will tell you it is ridiculously short; the dressmakers will be in despair."

"Never mind the dressmakers. I shouldn't mind if you came to me in one dress and no luggage, so that you came."

He was sitting on the sofa at her side.

Hyacinth wondered deeply whether he meant to spend all his leisure in staying at her home until they were married.

"But I suppose it is his right," thought the girl, bitterly; "he is going to purchase me with a heavy price, and has as much claim to look at me as any other commodity bought with his money."

"I want to know where I shall take you," Sir John went on, fondly; "should you like to go abroad?"

"Yes," returned Hyacinth, quickly, "very much."

"November is a good month for Paris. We might go there first, and then take a trip south, when the weather grows colder."

"Very well."

"I wish you would talk," he said, discontentedly, "and tell me something of your tastes. Hyacinth, you are not half as kind to me as you were that February evening long ago when you were at The Elms."

To his surprise she blushed crimson.

"I have often thought of that night and how kind you were to me."

"It was love at first sight," he answered. "I made up my mind then and there that you should be my wife."

"How is Mrs. Jackson?"

"Very well, and very anxious to welcome her new mistress. Hyacinth, I wish you could go over to The Elms; I should like you to choose your own rooms."

"I daresay Lady Norman would bring me over to lunch some day if you invited us," said Hyacinth.

She was anxious to do what she could to please him, if only out of gratitude for his great love—the love which was so heavy a burden to her because she could not return it.

"Do you think she would? I'll go and ask her."

The Countess agreed readily. She even suggested they should choose that very day for their expedition, provided Sir John thought an unexpected invasion would not tax his housekeeper's resources.

Sir John answered for Mrs. Jackson. The brougham was ordered, and the party set off.

"How fond you are of black!" he said, as Hyacinth came down in a black velvet suit, a Gainsborough hat, and drooping feathers; "one would think you were in mourning."

"I like black."

"It is too gloomy for you. Why, you are a mere child, Hyacinth; only eighteen!"

She smiled a little sadly.

"I don't feel like a child."

Lady Norman interposed.—

"That is only because you have been ill; not but what you do look much older these last few months. Don't you think so, Sir John?"

Her lover looked at Hyacinth critically.

"I see no change, Lady Norman."

"That is no compliment to Hyacinth. She used to be nothing but a pale, awkward child, and really now she is worth looking at."

"She always has," retorted Sir John.

The drive was very pleasant. Hyacinth leaned back in the carriage and thought of those weary walks across the common she had taken all one winter. Was it all a dream? Could those long, weary tramps really have happened? Had she, Hyacinth, really suffered an agony which now seemed to her worse than death?

"If I could blot it all out," she thought, "I might be happy yet, Sir John is so good to me. If only my heart were free! I must love him in time!"

They were at the entrance to The Elms now. Two men-servants stood in the hall; one came forward to receive the visitors. Sir John turned to the other.

"Send Mrs. Jackson here at once to receive her future mistress."

The housekeeper hurried to the scene, her subordinate flocking in her wake. Sir John gave his arm to his betrothed.

"This is my promised wife," he said to the old woman, kindly. "Jackson, I am sure you will welcome the future mistress of The Elms."

The old woman took the hand extended to her with great good will.

"We are not quite strangers, my lady," she said, with great respect. "I mind well the night when your ladyship came here in the snow-storm."

Lady Norman lingered in the grand drawing-room. She had no mind to join in the thorough tour of the house on which Sir John and Hyacinth had started.

The Countess requested luncheon might be at two, and that someone should arouse her a few minutes beforehand. Then she sat down in a low lounging chair, and settled herself for a nap.

The other two wandered through the handsome reception-rooms, the guest chambers, the stately corridors, slowly and abstractedly. Sir John was thinking of the time when they would be brightened by Hyacinth's presence; and she was dreaming of the happiness that might have been hers had she loved him—had no terrible secret stood between them.

At last they came back to the grand hall, and, a little uncertainty, a little diffidence, Hyacinth pointed to a small door.

"Is not that Mrs. Jackson's room?" she asked, "where she took me that dreadful night?"

"Where I carried you," corrected Sir John, opening the door, and leading her in. "Yes; how this brings that night back to me, Hyacinth! You were covered with snow; I could see nothing of you; I thought at first you were dead. How little I thought as I carried you up the avenue that I was bringing my wife home in my arms!"

She looked at him wistfully. They were sitting side by side on the very sofa where he had laid her first.

"I shall never forget how good you were to me," she whispered.

"And I, too, shall never forget that night. Hyacinth, if I had lost you what should I have done?"

"Lost me!"

"Aye; if you had persisted in your refusal—if another man had won your love!"

A burning blush dyed her cheek. Sir John went on.

"I can bear to marry you, knowing you have no love for me, because I feel in time I can win your heart; but I would never have shared that heart with another. I have one terrible fault, Hyacinth—I am passionately jealous. I could brook no rival; my wife must belong to me—to me only!"

He looked at her almost fiercely. A confession she had been longing to make died there upon her lips. In after days how bitterly she regretted not having made it!

"I could almost be glad," went on Sir John, "you had so little love and tenderness shown you in your childhood. You will be the more my own; I shall have your whole confidence!"

"I will do my best," said Hyacinth, faintly. "I will do all I can to please you."

"Only love me!" he answered. "I want your heart, Hyacinth; nothing else in the world will content me!"

Hyacinth answered nothing. How could she?

Sir John went on.

"We will have no secrets, dear, and then we are sure of happiness. Now, I want to talk to you about our wedding. I wish it to be a very grand one. I want people to come from far and near to do honour to my beautiful bride, and I want to ask your kindness, Hyacinth, for two friends of mine."

"Two friends of yours?" delighted there was anything the could do to please him. "Of course. I will ask the Countess to invite them, and do my best for them to like me."

"They are not quite of your world," said Sir John, simply. "Arnold Grant is an artist, and one of the best fellows I know. He has not long been married. I have never seen his wife, but I know it was a long engagement, and they were devotedly attached to each other. They are about as poor as two church mice; but I could not bear for Grant not to be at my wedding, and I could hardly expect him to leave his wife."

"Lady Norman will write. Do they live in London? Perhaps we might call some day. The Countess says she shall have to take me to town perpetually."

"Their address is Oewego-crescent, Camden-square—No. 4, I think. Hyacinth, I expect their home is miserably small and poverty-stricken; but you will remember Grant is my friend, and, to my mind, friendship is a very sacred thing."

"Very."

"Have you no friends?"

She shook her head.

"I don't think I have a friend in the world except Miss Johnson."

"I thought you didn't like her?"

"She has been so good to me this last year." Here Hyacinth's eyes filled with tears. "But for her goodness I think I must have died, I was so ill."

"So ill as that!" and his arm was thrown around her, as though even now he feared she might be wafted away from him; "and I never knew it!"

"I used to wish that I could die," went on Hyacinth. "You see I was so tired and lonely!"

"You shall never be lonely again, my darling! Hyacinth, in a few minutes we must go back to your stepmother; but first I want you to kiss me."

Her eyes drooped.

"You are to be my wife," he said, fondly: "surely you will not refuse me one touch of your lips?"

"I do not think I am fond of kissing, Sir John."

"You must make me an exception to your rule; and how much longer are you going to call me Sir John, Hyacinth?"

"I don't know."

"You must drop the handle, dear."

"I will try."

"And the other matter?" bending his handsome head. "Do you know, Hyacinth, I am waiting for your kiss?"

She hesitated.

"You do not dislike me?" he said, suddenly. "There is nothing about me distasteful to you?"

"No—oh, no!"

"Then—"

"You said you would teach me to love you," she whispered. "It will be time enough for kisses when I have learned that lesson."

Sir John laughed.

"No, it won't; I am not going to be deprived of all my rights. I must have the kisses now! The love"—there was a strange break in his voice—"I must wait for!"

A surging flood of recollections almost overpowered Hyacinth. Must she really do the thing she who had believed her lips were

sacred to the dead?—but there was a look in Sir John's face told her he was not to be trifled with, and so, tremblingly, she did his bidding.

"What a frightened bird you are, Hyacinth!" observed her lover, when he had repaid her gift with interest.

A gong struck to announce luncheon, Sir John led Hyacinth back to the drawing-room, where they found the Countess looking as wideawake as though she had not been engaged in dozing.

They went into the dining-room together. The repast did credit to Sir John's servants; the viands were delicate, and cooked with skill; three men in livery attended upon the party; and a profusion of rich late autumn flowers, arranged in glass vases, added not a little to the charming appearance of the table. Lady Norman looked on with great approval.

"You are a very lucky girl," she said to her stepdaughter when afternoon tea had been served them in a pretty octagon apartment which Sir John meant to become his wife's boudoir; "your lover seems to have no thought but how to please you. Rich men are generally so near; but Sir John has assuredly generous notions. He is going to furnish this room in blue satin for you, and drape the walls with real lace curtains; the floor is to be polished and covered with Eastern rugs. The boudoir will be a perfect gem when it is completed."

"He is very generous!"

"Well, you have turned out a beauty," admitted the Countess; "but, then, you can't owe his infatuation to your looks, for he always says he fell in love with you last winter, and you were nothing but an awkward child then. Certainly *now* you will be a credit to him."

Hyacinth went home with her tired, weary face and aching heart. Her lover was all generosity—true; and her father was making desperate efforts to provide her with a trousseau suited to her future fortunes; but how little either of them guessed the girl's yearning need of ready money!

One single five-pound note was all Hyacinth had in the world, and already she foresaw the difficulties of getting more.

Sir John was just the kind of man to load a wife with presents, to let her have no wish ungratified, and yet leave her with no more money in her purse than the daily needs of her position required; and, unluckily, there was a cause for Hyacinth to want money which bid fair to grow heavier year by year.

"If only papa would let me order my trousseau!" thought the girl, wistfully, "I would save some of the money, and have fewer things; but Lady Norman will spend every penny, she is so bent on making what she calls a good appearance." Oh, dear! what shall I do? Miss Johnson has a little money, I know, but I can't bear to borrow of her. Besides, she will need her savings. I know she is looking out for another situation. How hard it seems at her time of life!"

Lady Hyacinth turned into the school-room with her slow, weary step. She wanted to tell her old friend the story of her days at The Elms, but she started when she perceived Miss Johnson, arrayed in the best black silk, which never saw the light excepting on high festivals.

The old maid had recklessly put on her point lace collar and silver bracelets—in fact, her whole stock of finery, and she looked so altogether jubilant that Hyacinth thought she must have taken leave of her senses, when these words fell on her ear—

"My dear, I have had a terrible shock!"

Hyacinth tried to express her sympathy. She wondered vaguely if to array one's self in one's best apparel was the surest cure for a trouble. Then she paused, and waited for an elucidation of the mystery.

It was long in coming. Miss Johnson once upset was very difficult to compose.

"I declare I don't know whether I am

July 25, 1885.

THE LONDON READER.

299

standing on my head or my heels!" began the poor old spinster, sadly. "This morning I was as down as possible. I knew I should not be wanted here and that I was over old for getting another situation. I had calculated if I could live on my savings, but I found I couldn't. I assure you, Hyacinth, I was at my last gasp."

Hyacinth kissed her.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"You had enough to trouble you. Besides, it's all past now, and I feel the most fortunate woman in the whole world."

"But you said you had had a shock?"

"I'm coming to that, dear. It was just after dinner I was trying to draw up an advertisement, but I felt rather drowsy, and it was hard work. I'd only got to the first line, when James came to say a gentleman was waiting to see me."

"A gentleman!"

"I knew it was a mistake; I felt quite sure of it, but he persisted, and so I let James show him in here. A tall, handsome man, my dear, about sixty, with gold-rimmed spectacles."

"Never mind his spectacles; what did he want?" asked Hyacinth, whose curiosity was fairly roused.

"To see me, dear," replied Miss Johnson, simpering. "He said he had something particular to say to me."

"And had he?"

"Yes, he had come to break the blow," resumed Miss Johnson, suddenly. "My uncle, Hyacinth, the only relation I had in the world, has died in the West Indies of yellow fever. He wasn't ill twelve hours."

"How very sad!" said Hyacinth, sympathetically. "But then you know, Miss Johnson, you had never been there, so you can't be really very much cut up."

"That's what Mr. Mason said, Hyacinth; but when my poor uncle thought so much of me it seems hard-hearted to sit here happy and contented and enjoy what was his without a regret that he's dead and gone."

The words were a revelation to Hyacinth.

"Do you mean your uncle has left you any money? Oh, Miss Johnson, I hope so."

"Everything he had in the world, my dear. Six hundred a-year Mr. Mason said it would bring in. Of course it's nothing to Sir John's fortune. Well, it seems riches to me."

"I am so glad."

Only four words, but there was a sterling ring of truth in them which went to the other's heart.

"I can't realize it yet, Hyacinth. I put on my best clothes and sat down and tried to imagine myself a rich woman, but I'm only just got to believing I needn't put in an advertisement or look out for another situation."

"Shall you stay here? Oh do, Miss Johnson."

"I don't know," carefully. "There are some pretty little houses the other side of the common; I might be able to afford one of them. I want to make a little home of my own and settle down."

"I wish I could come with you."

The other shook her head.

"You've got to be a great lady, my dear, and I'm nothing but a plain old maid."

"You have been the best and kindest of friends to me. Oh Miss Johnson, what should I have done without you?"

"There, there," kissing the girl and stroking her soft hair, "it's little though, I was able to do then, Hyacinth, I can do more now."

"More?"

"You would trust what you prize with me," said Miss Johnson, who was given to phrase her sentences rather vaguely.

"Sooner than with anyone in the world."

"Then the thing is done. Your anxieties on that point are over. I am rich now. You know I shall not need payment. I'd do it for you gladly, Hyacinth, just for love."

The girl looked up with dreary eyes.

"But what would people say?"

Miss Johnson smiled faintly.

"I'm an old woman now, Hyacinth, and I

never was a pretty one. I'm not afraid of the gossip of idle tongues. Scandal might sting you to death, child, but it can't hurt me."

"Are you sure?"

"Certain. Besides, it will end so many difficulties. Yorkshire is so far off. How could you get there? Why, it takes a day well nigh for the journey."

Hyacinth burst into tears.

"If I had known this yesterday!" she moaned; "if only the news had come sooner!"

The older woman smiled.

"No, no, child," she said, half sadly. "What is best. You're not fitted for a lonely life; you'll be best Sir John's wife, your future safe in a good man's keeping; only I felt when this news came it made all clear and easy. I was glad for myself to be spared registry offices and governesses, but I rejoiced most for you, Hyacinth, most of all for you."

"But how can I let you sacrifice yourself to me? Don't you see it is not for weeks or months; it may be years before I can lift the burden off your shoulders."

"I hate being alone," returned the governess, fiercely, "and you know I am quite a rich woman now. Six hundred a year. Only fancy, my dear!"

And Hyacinth envied her. The poor girl would have preferred a smaller income than Miss Johnson's, and freedom to queening it over the county as Sir John's wife, and mistress of his princely wealth.

"I must stay till your wedding," said Miss Johnson, presently. "The Countess herself wished that; then, when you have started on your travels, I shall find a quiet home, and we shall be so cosy."

Hyacinth's lip faltered.

"Why should you not live here?" she murmured. "There are cottages to spare the other side of the common; there I could see you often."

"Would it be wise?"

"Wise!"

"You will belong to your husband then. Don't you think he would grudge your devotion to an old woman like me!"

"No," said Hyacinth, stoutly. "I don't think Sir John is mean enough to grudge my affection for an old friend."

"It would not be wise," repeated Miss Johnson. "Hyacinth, you are so young you could not keep a constant command over yourself, an incessant guard over your words and acts, my darling. Either the struggle would wear you out, or you would betray our secret."

"I would be so careful."

The other shook her head.

"Besides," she murmured, "we do not know how things may turn out; there might be a silent witness stronger than word or deed of yours to rise up and betray you."

Hyacinth groaned.

"You are upset," she said at last. "I yield, only it would have made me happy. I think I could have borne anything if I had known that you were there almost at my threshold."

The pronoun you might be used in speaking to one person or a hundred. Hyacinth did not expect a hundred persons to reside in Miss Johnson's cottage, but just as certainly she did not include only the kind old maid in that simple word "you."

"You will tell papa," said Hyacinth, slowly; "he will be pleased to hear of your good fortune."

But Miss Johnson shook her head.

"It will be better not, Hyacinth; there would be too many questions. Wait until I am away from Normanhurst; then I will write to my lady."

It was a very busy time that followed. Sir John Carlyle complained bitterly that he could never have his darling to himself—between dressmakers and milliners her time was entirely taken up.

"You will have plenty of me by-and-by," said Hyacinth, smiling. "We are going to

London to-morrow, and we mean to call in Oswego-crescent."

He looked at her gratefully.

"It is good of you to remember my wishes."

Oswego-crescent proved very different from what Lady Hyacinth had imagined; instead of the diminutive houses she had expected to see the Crescent consisted of a dozen family residences. Evidently the Grants lived in apartments.

"I wish we had not come," murmured the Countess, as she walked up the steps. "No one comes il faut can live here."

The servant declared Mrs. Grant was at home, and ushered the ladies into a little parlour, neat and tasteful as ever they could wish; a large tabby cat asleep on the hearth-rug, and a young girl sitting in a low chair by the fire.

At least she looked a young girl. Her four-and-twenty years sat lightly on her brow—the perfect freedom from care which had been her lot had left her calm and unruffled.

She greeted her visitors with simple grace.

"We must introduce ourselves," said the elder lady, grandly. "I am the Countess of Norman, and this my step-daughter, Lady Hyacinth Dane."

Katy Grant wondered what in the world had brought her a visit from such titled ladies. Hyacinth explained; it was characteristic of the girl that she never had any reserve or hesitation in speaking of her marriage. The Countess sometimes told her that if she had been engaged a dozen years she could not have taken things more calmly.

"We have come to invite you to my wedding. I am going to be married this month to Sir John Carlyle."

Katy smiled.

"I am sure you will be happy," she said, gently. "Sir John is one of my husband's greatest friends; Arnold says sometimes he owes to him all his prosperity. I have never seen your fiance, Lady Hyacinth, but I hear of him so often that I seem to know him well."

"You must come to Normanhurst," said the Countess, "and make Sir John's acquaintance there."

"I should like very much, but—"

"I think I will leave Hyacinth to do her own pleading," said Lady Norman. "I will drive on and come back for her in half-an-hour."

Left alone the happy young wife and the girl who contemplated a loveless marriage almost unconsciously drew their chairs nearer together. Katy Grant was the first to speak.

"It was very kind of you to come here, Lady Hyacinth, busy as you must be."

"I wished to see you. Oh, Mrs. Grant, do come to Normanhurst. I want you so much to be at our wedding."

Katy hesitated.

"I will be frank," she said, simply. "Do you know that Arnold and I are two very foolish young people? I think our income would make you shrink at our audacity in getting married at all."

"I have heard you are not rich. But surely you believe I don't measure people by their wealth?"

"It is not that, only we are not used to grand parties. I think I should be out of place, Lady Hyacinth, amid the brilliant toilets of your guests."

Hyacinth smiled.

"I will welcome you gladly just as you are."

"No, I could do better than that. I could promise you not to appear in my old blue serge."

"Do come," whispered Hyacinth, nervously toying with the fringe of her mantle. "Mrs. Grant, do you know the only request Sir John has ever made to me was that I would persuade you to be present at our wedding?" again the fingers twitched nervously at the handsome fringe. "He is too good and generous to me, and I can do so little for him. Do not make me fail in this the one thing he has asked me."



[“YOU ARE TO BE MY WIFE,” HE SAID, FONDLY. “SURELY YOU WILL NOT REFUSE ME ONE TOUCH OF YOUR LIPS?”]

Katy was touched. She was, as she had frankly said, poor, and Hyacinth would be a millionaire's wife; but there was that in the girl's face which made the happy little matron feel that her own lot was instinctively the fairer of the two.

“We will come if it be in any way possible, Lady Hyacinth,” she said, gently. “I assure you Arnold has no common affection for Sir John—we both shall rejoice at his happiness.”

Hyacinth blushed crimson.

“You ought to wish he had found a better wife.”

“No. I would rather believe he had been fortunate in his choice. Have you been engaged long, Lady Hyacinth?”

“Five weeks.”

“And you are to be married on the twenty-eighth?”

“Yes. It is a very short engagement, but Sir John is impatient.”

“And you give way to him?”

“Yes,” said Hyacinth, with a strange sigh. “There is no advantage in delay.”

“Do not speak so sadly of what ought to make the happiness of your life.”

“Don't be shocked,” pleaded Hyacinth, gently. “But I would rather tell you myself than that you should find it out when you come to Normanhurst. You must not expect to find us a very romantic pair. I am a cold disposition; I don't think I believe in love, and—and that sort sort of thing.”

“My dear! You cannot mean it?”

“Yes,” said Hyacinth. “I think love brings more pain than happiness. I think it is a pity people cannot be satisfied with quiet esteem and liking.”

“You are too young to speak like this.”

“I am nearly nineteen, but I seem to have lived much longer, and I am so tired.”

Katy stooped and kissed her. She really could not help the caress—she forgot it was given to a perfect stranger.

“My dear, my dear, you must not talk so

sadly, and within a fortnight of your wedding, too. What would Sir John say?”

“I don't know.”

But she blushed so much that, in very pity for her hot cheeks, Mrs. Grant had to choose another subject than the baronet's sentiments.

“Do you like London, Lady Hyacinth?”

“I know very little of it. Do you live here?”

“Yes; but we shall not be in these apartments much longer. We are looking out for a house of our own—a little place we can call home.”

“How nice!”

“My husband is an artist, and requires a studio. This makes our search a little difficult. I am sure when Arnold sees you, Lady Hyacinth, he will beg a favour at your hands.”

“A favour!”

“He will ask to paint your picture. You cannot think the rapture a beautiful face is to him.”

“And you think mine beautiful?”

“Can you ask me?”

Hyacinth sighed.

“A year ago I was a little ugly child. I used to long for beauty more than anything else in the world.”

“You have it now.”

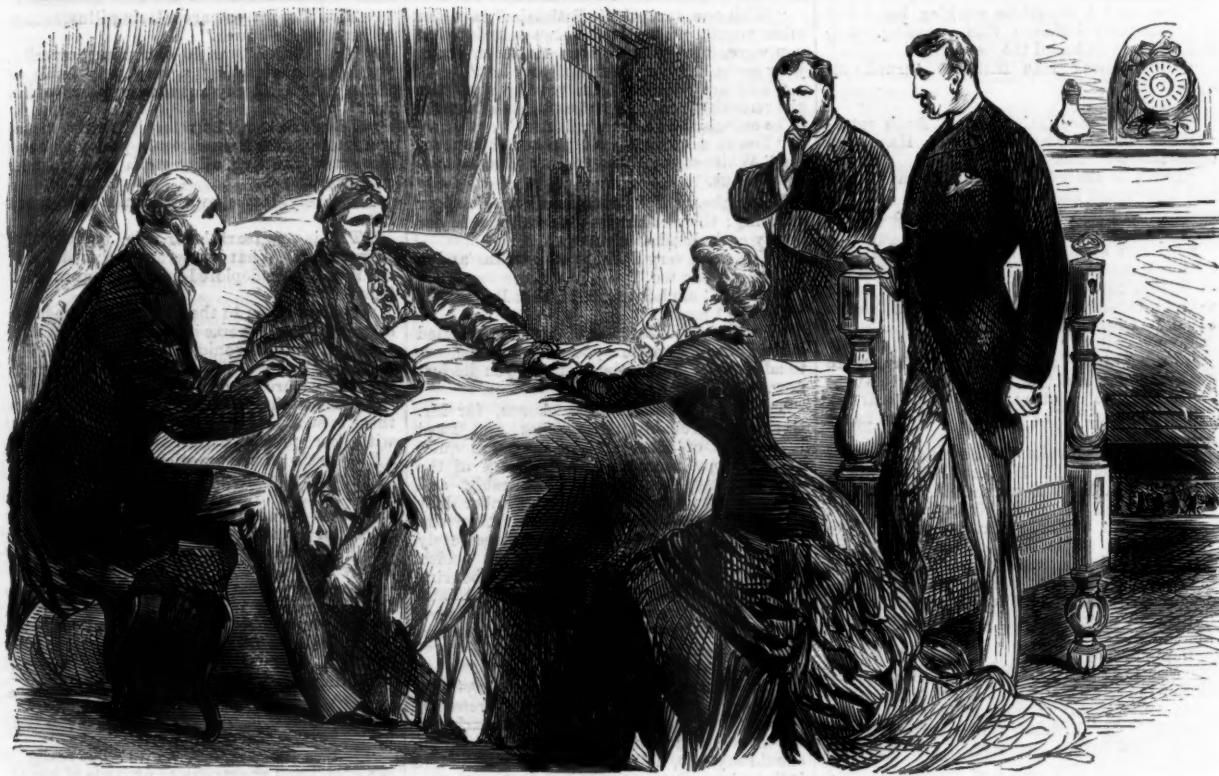
The door opened, and Mr. Grant appeared for a moment. He stood spell-bound. Never in his life had he seen a lovelier vision than the fair girl who stood talking to his wife, and he felt that they did not meet for the first time. Somewhere or other he had seen that face before—he had stored in his memory its fac-simile, only less beautiful.

(To be continued.)

These are the girls grown into women, from whom we expect more virtue than from our friends, more than from ourselves. We should find it highly disagreeable to live under the same roof with most of the very good friends on our visiting list, and we fancy we should often find them devoid of the patience and courtesy we expect of our servants. Think of one of your own daughters in the same position. Is it not then that you watch her most carefully, guard her most anxiously from the undesirable companions, make daily allowances for the whims and vagaries of a half-formed character? Yet, if our boasted antecedents are worth half what we prize them at, your daughter is far more able to guide herself than your servant. When we think of the folly and presumption, the want of sense of fitness, not to speak of the silly school-girl tricks that stand in the record of our own teens, we should surely lay our mouths in the dust before we speak so harshly of these uncared for children. Treat your servants as you would wish your daughter to be treated by the woman under whose care she was placed, and we do not think we should any longer bandy our domestic rules to and fro. Do your daughters divide their time between fine clothes and future husbands? Then it is equally desirable for your servants. There is nothing in this world so difficult, requiring more tact and patience, more often futile in the end, than the endeavour to inspire confidence in one who has repeatedly been deceived, or who has grown up with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him; but it is none the less worth doing because of that. Only to obtain confidence it must be merited; and to lead others to the unselfish performance of duty it is necessary to walk a long way ahead.

If it is good to be unselfish and generous; but don't carry that too far. It will not do to give yourself to be melted down for the benefit of the tallow trade; you must know where to find yourself.

OUR SERVANTS.—The lot of servants, as a rule, is a hard one. Girls coming from poor and undisciplined homes, beginning work low down in the scale of drudgery, grow to women through circumstances, scenes, and signs from which we would guard our own children.



["PERHAPS YOU WILL FIND IT THE LESS HARD TO FORGIVE THE WRONG, BECAUSE I AM A DYING WOMAN!"]

NOVELETTE.]

THE

ARCHITECT'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

"WHAT a fool I am!" says Mr. Garnet, striding to and fro.

"Have you only just discovered that, papa?" questions a young lady demurely, as she looks up from her occupation of sharpening pencils.

For a moment he regards her with pretended disfavour, then the line of his mouth bends, and the smile flashes from lips to eyes.

"You're a very irreverent young woman, Poppy; with all your mother's tutoring you should be the reverse of what you are."

"I should not be nearly as pleasant if I were," answers the girl, saucily, "and in your heart of hearts you like me best as I am. But what makes you feel your folly so particularly this morning?"

"When I was up at Landor's last spring he told me his boy had a fancy for my profession, and asked as a special favour if I would receive him as pupil if he continued in the same mind. Well, I said yes, thinking nothing would come of it, and now Landor is off to Barbadoes, and has written me that the youngster is on his way to us."

"That is an extremely casual way of proceeding," says Poppy, puckering her pretty brow into the semblance of a frown; "what takes Mr. Landor to Barbadoes?"

"Business. If he transacts it to the satisfaction of the firm he will be made partner on his return; he's a lucky fellow."

"How old is Edward, and what sort of creature is he?"

"Seventeen, and as raw a specimen of youth as you can imagine."

She makes an absurd little grimace, "Poor mamma," she murmurs reflectively.

and after a pause, "poor Edward," then laughs.

"What time is this young savage to arrive?"

"Twelve-thirty; will you tell your mother to have his room ready. I am going into the town now, and have no time to waste. I suppose I shall have to meet the boy, too, and bring him on here," and so saying he goes out, and Poppy hastens to inform her mother of the new arrival.

Mrs. Garnet is not pleased, but as this is her normal condition, nobody pays any attention to it. She is a tall, thin woman, with pale face and a general appearance of languor, which contrasts vividly with her daughter's bright prettiness. Having delivered her message, the latter hastens away to a long, lofty room, where there are three or four high stools and desks, a quantity of papers, compasses and other articles pertaining to the profession of architecture.

Miss Poppy mounts one of these stools, looking very sober and business-like, but she does not attempt to work, only sits looking out of the window, with great, serious brown eyes, and reflective face. She makes a dainty patch of colour in the long bare room, and her prettiness is of that warm, bright order which almost invariably reminds one of a summer morning.

Her face is small and oval, and surrounded by thick, short curls. It is one of Poppy's grievances that her hair is like a boy's, for length and crispness; her brows are dark and straight, and her complexion pale olive, with a crimson glow in the pretty cheeks. For the rest, her figure is daintily round, her hands and feet small; but the former are strong and steady, despite their slimness and seeming fragility.

The young ladies of Drewminster regard Poppy enviously, and say unpleasant little things about her, partly because she is so pretty, but especially because she has so many admirers, and openly prefers the society of men to that of her own sex.

Mr. Garnet has educated his daughter on a plan of his own, much to his wife's disgust. He has taught her from the store of his own knowledge; she has learned Latin and music, drawing, and a host of things not usually comprised in a girl's education, but he had finally declined to allow her to attend the dancing school.

Still she has contrived to learn something of that art too from her father's pupils, most of whom lived in the town; she has grown up, frank and unaffected, a little inclined to coquetry, but sensible and industrious, in her own particular branch of work. Her father calls her his right hand and declares that many of his best plans are worked up from her ideas.

At present he has three pupils, one of them a boarder, whose articles will expire in six months' time. He is called Felix Eyre, and is a great favourite with all; three months ago there had been another pupil, a gentleman by birth and fortune, who meeting, and being attracted by, Mr. Garnet had proposed to spend six months with him, saying he had a natural taste for architecture, and wanted some employment to fill his otherwise idle days until his friends returned to England. He has just left Cambridge, where he had taken a good degree, but as he had embraced no profession, time passed heavily with him.

Mr. Garnet willingly agreed to Herbert Rithdale's proposal, and he became an inmate of Gloucester House; but when little more than three months had passed he suddenly resolved to quit Drewminster, and went away with scarcely a good-bye to any of his daily associates. It is of this man Poppy thinks as she sits before the open window; she wonders dreamily why he had left them so suddenly, if he had any cause for anger against them, and in the midst of her musings a young man enters.

"Dreaming, Poppy?" he questions, loitering at her desk.

July 25, 1885.

"Yes, and I should be working, but I feel unaccountably indolent this morning. Oh, Felix, have you heard the news?"

"What news? Has Rithdale turned up again?"

"No!"

"Are you meditating some fresh extravagance in the way of dress? Have you come into a fortune?"

"Don't be absurd; was I ever extravagant? and who would leave me a fortune? No, my child; there is a new pupil coming to-day—a boarder; too! Why, how you scowl."

"Do you suppose I forget how that prig Rithdale monopolised you? How he talked of books, flowers, and all that he knew would interest you, as none of your old friends could? I hate boarders."

Poppy smiles.

"Poor thing, is it jealous?" Then more gravely, "but, Felix, it isn't like you to abuse an inoffensive creature, and I can't bear my friends spoken of as 'prigs.' What a nasty word it is."

"Friends!" breaks in the young man, "I should scarcely call Herbert Rithdale your friend. You have never heard of or from him since he left Drewminster; and if you had been an ordinary girl he would have spoiled your whole life for you, by winning your love and then casting it aside. I'm sure he paid you greatest court; perhaps he was afraid Mr. Garnet would call him to account, and so left hurriedly, and before matters had gone too far."

Poppy's eyes flash.

"You are talking very foolishly, Felix. My father is perfectly aware I am not so stupid as to construe any man's courtesy into 'lovemaking.' Mr. Rithdale was a very pleasant companion (which sometimes you are not, instance this morning); he taught me very much, and I am not ungrateful."

"I beg your pardon, Poppy. I ought to be ashamed of myself; but—but if I knew any man trifled with you I would make him regret his baseness to the day of his death."

The girl is touched; her pretty, piquante face softens, her large eyes shine with some sudden emotion, and she lays her little hand in his with a confiding gesture.

"You are very good to me, Felix, although I tease and snub you often." A ripple of fun passes over her face as she adds, "You need not fear the new boarder; he is only seventeen, and, according to papa, the most awkward youth in existence."

Then she draws her hand from his and turns to her work; he, too, seats himself at his desk, and they labour on silently until the door is flung open, and two youths enter boisterously. Each bows ceremoniously to the girl, who gives a staid acknowledgment of their greeting, and then they, too, take their places.

Presently one looks up and says,—

"Oh, Miss Poppy! His Serene Highness has condescended to visit Drewminster."

The girl lifts her brows.

"To whom do you refer, Mr. White?"

"To Rithdale, of course; he scarcely acknowledged me."

"Did you expect he would?" questions Felix.

"Scarcely, when I saw who his companion was—such a lovely girl! I declare I quite envied him."

Poppy turns her face towards the youth.

"Tell us about her; we are all anxious to hear," she says, carelessly.

Felix lifts his head and looks at her.

"She was very fair, with yellow-brown hair, taller than you, Miss Poppy, and she seemed pleased with and proud of her companion."

"What did she wear?"

White bursts into a loud laugh.

"I knew that question would come. Well, she had on a saucy affair, and it suited her beautifully; but don't ask me for details, they are a trifle beyond me."

"So I suppose," says Poppy, coolly; "men are invariably stupid about such things."

"With one exception—Rithdale," says the other youth. "I believe he always knew what you wore, how many ribbons fluttered about your gown, the very name of your hat."

"You are praising him very highly," the girl remarks, ironically; "he would be flattered to be eulogised as a man-milliner."

"You're not very well pleased this morning," White says; "and you are going to take it out of us."

He laughs, as if he considers Poppy's anger amusing; the girl laughs too, and shakes her pretty curly-head at him.

"You are a very daring young man, and a very mean one too."

"Oh! oh! explain yourself, Miss Poppy. In what am I mean?"

"In taking advantage of my unprotected state. If papa were here you would not venture to address me so disrespectfully as you did just now."

There follows a laughing chorus, for Mr. Garnet is probably the mildest and most inoffensive of men. When they are quiet again Poppy remarks that the work of the day is progressing very unfavourably, and entreats her companions to remember duty should always be first with them; then she turns her back upon them, and resolutely refuses to talk. So in silence the golden morning is waning away; a neighbouring clock gives out that it is half-past eleven, and the girl yawns over her stack of chinneys, stretches out her pretty dimpled hands, and asks carelessly,

"How was Mr. Rithdale looking?"

"Exhausted, rather," says White, trying to balance a pencil on his inconsequent reticule rose; "he was, as usual, chiefly remarkable for the severity neatness of his attire. Oh! I should say, too, he has been ill; he looks like it."

"Pale and thin?" questions Poppy carelessly, whilst her eyes wander to the street beyond the garden.

"That's it; and as though he thought life a nuisance altogether."

"Poor Mr. Rithdale," laughing, "he would admire your graphic description immensely. How antagonistic you two always were!"

"Did he say he should call at Gloucester House?" Felix asks, with ill-concealed anxiety. "Oh! I forgot you said he only bowed."

"Do you suppose he would leave such a divinity for the sake of your humble servant? Rithdale isn't quite such a fool."

"He is almost sure to call here."

"Why, Felix?" breaks in Poppy with her laziest manner, "he would scarcely do that. Remember how anxious he was to leave us."

"That is what I can't understand, because the day previous to his going he told me he intended remaining three months longer."

"Men are curiously fickle creatures," remarks Poppy, sententiously; "oh! how I wish the morning gone; or rather the whole day. I do hope to-morrow will be fine; I'm quite longing for our trip, Felix. I suppose we shall have to invite that wretched Landor boy?"

"That will be to spoil the day; can't we annihilate him?"

"And be hanged for it? Ugh! I feel the rope about my throat already."

"We might upset the boat."

"When I should certainly be drowned, for you can't swim."

Here Mr. Garnet looks in.

"Eyre," he says, "I'm going to meet Landor—will you come?"

"It is something like meeting trouble half way, but I haven't the conscience to fail you now, sir," and laughing he goes out, leaving Poppy with the two pupils. The girl steps down from her stool.

"I'm awfully tired," she says, and seats herself on the low window-sill, bending back her head, and toying lazily with the blossoms and ivy within her reach.

"Miss Poppy, you are a living illustration of beauty in a bower."

"Mr. White," with charming severity, "you are contracting a very ugly habit of flattery, and all my rebukes appear to fall flat."

"I don't flatter," he retorts, stoutly, "and you know you're tremendously pretty; you're like an oil-painting, all warmth and richness of colour."

The lovely, lazy eyes regard him with mock horror.

"This is very fearful, Mr. Rae (to her other companion). What has wrought this singular and much-to-be-deplored change in our mutual friend?"

"He has taken to the muse, and practices upon you. Blank verse is his forte. Ah! White, that is a truly Byronic soul."

White springs up, threatening revenge; stools are thrown down, papers flutter from the desks to the floor, and for a few moments there is such a riot that Poppy covers her ears with her pretty hands. When peace is a little restored she questions antirically,

"Is that your notion of enjoyment?"

"It is mine," Rae answers, quickly. "White loves best to stroll at night and 'bay to the moon,' or rant of broken hearts and blighted lives. What is your idea of enjoyment, Miss Poppy?"

"Floating down stream on such a day as this, and doing nothing, not even talking; supreme indolence, both mental and physical. Oh! breaking off suddenly and drawing from the window. 'Oh! angels and ministers of grace defend us.'

The young men join her. "What is it? ah! the new pupil, by Jove! Rae, we shall have to lick the young cub into shape."

"Is that Byronic, Mr. White? but really he is awful," and she strikes an attitude of horror.

Walking up the trim path are Mr. Garnet and Felix, and between them a tall, ungainly, and extremely plain youth, who seems at a loss what to do with his legs and arms, and trails his stick upon the ground. The three are quite silent. Felix looks disgusted, Mr. Garnet perplexed, and young Landor confused.

"He won't increase the liveliness of our party," Rae remarks, dolefully. "I hate lads of seventeen."

"Were you eighteen or nineteen last month, Mr. Rae?" Poppy questions, demurely. "Oh! do not look so indignant, you alarm me."

The door is flung open and Felix enters, hot and vexed. The girl assails him with a perfect volley of questions,—

"Is he quite as stupid as he looks? How did he receive you? What is his idea of Drewminster?"

"Oh, Heaven!" Felix says, savagely, "he's the most insane object I've ever had the misfortune to meet. With all our efforts Mr. Garnet and I could extract nothing but monosyllabic answers; he will be a perfect drag upon us, a 'death's head at every feast.' Poppy, I make over this acquisition to society to you."

Ah! that is true charity," with light mockery; "but to me Edward Landor seems incapable of appreciating even my delicate and graceful wit, my most flattering attentions. I hope he will soon tire of his fancy, and leave us to our old enviable freedom of intercourse."

A wish the three young men echo; White supplements it,—

"If he proves such an object for derision as Eyre represents we must give him a roasting, and you, Miss Poppy, shall be queen of the ceremonies."

"Thank you, I decline to have anything to do with the young savage."

A little later the dinner-bell rings (the household arrangements are very primitive, and the meal of the day is at one). White and Rae take their hats and bow themselves out, whilst Felix and Poppy go to the large sitting-room, where Mrs. Garnet is vainly striving to win Landor to speech. She presents him to her daughter, and he bows awkwardly, but says nothing; the girl, however, is not easily

daunted. She motions him to the seat beside her.

"We are to be companions," she explains, cheerfully, "and I am to give you your very first lesson, so we may as well get acquainted at once. Your desk is next to mine."

This speech falls flat, as do Mr. Garnet's and Eyre's. Landor makes scarcely any response, and the lady of the house grows visibly impatient. But Poppy turns her bright face towards him, with a fluttering look of interest in him.

"You have been residing with your father lately?" she says, with well-simulated ignorance. "You will miss him greatly."

"I—I have just left school."

"Oh! I believe papa told me that, but it had escaped my memory. I am so very forgetful."

This time there is no response. But, nothing daunted, she asks,—

"Was it a public school?"

"No," growing hot and more confused each moment.

"I always think private schools so much nicer (secretly she does not), especially when the masters are kindly. Were you fortunate in that respect?"

"Yes."

The pretty face beams on him, the brown eyes smile into his; and the low voice goes on with great apparent interest.

"Of course you are proficient in all the popular games?"

"I was captain of the cricketing team," with a sudden burst of confidence, and for a moment his manner is enthusiastic; but meeting Eyre's eyes, he drops again into his awkward silence.

"Tell me about the matches you played. I prefer cricket to any sport for men; it is such a thoroughly English game;" and little by little she wins him to speak of his defeats and his triumphs, until he forgets his shyness and talks unconstrainedly with her.

He is unfeignedly sorry when dinner is over, and Mrs. Garnet escorts him to his room; not so Felix, who gives a sigh of mingled relief and displeasure. He walks with Poppy into the shady garden at the back of the house, and there is a slight frown on his brow which she is quick to notice.

"You are not pleased with the addition to our household, Felix?"

"No, he is an unmitigated idiot, and will be the very bane of my existence. I guess I shall have no quiet times with you now; he will follow you from place to place, claim all your attention, need all your help; instance the past hour. The first half you spent trying to make him talk, the second in listening to his stupid, bald stories. I had not a chance to address you."

"Poor Felix!" with her pretty, mocking smile; "I am sorry for you, but still more sorry for that poor, awkward boy. I was quite angry with him once for his stupidity, but I can't help pitying him, and I shall constitute myself his guardian and mentor until he is able to think, speak, and act for himself; but, I will confess to you, he honest me awfully."

Returning to the house, they see Landor hovering about the hall; Poppy at once addresses him.

"Do you wish to begin work to-day?"

"Yes, Miss Garnet."

"Very well, come with me, I will introduce you to your fellow-pupils;" and she leads the way to the "office," as it is called, and performs the ceremony of introduction.

Rae and White nod carelessly to the new pupil, and the former declares audibly he is a "regular man," which opinion heightens Landor's confusion. But he speedily forgets this, for Poppy is the kindest and most attentive of teachers, and shields him from the ridicule his uncouth manners draw upon him. But she is heartily glad when four o'clock strikes, and work is ended for the day. She is too fatigued to remain with the youth, who already shows an inclination to follow her in all her movements; so she runs to her own room, and, taking a novel, sits down before

the open window, hidden from passers-by by the brilliant flowers and bright foliage.

But her book certainly claims little of her attention; her eyes wander from it often, and her thoughts are far away. Once she looks down into the street, and sees a gentleman passing; he is rather below the medium height, and strongly built; his face is dark and sallow, his eyes intensely brown. As Poppy looks at him her pretty colour grows a little paler.

"Is he coming?" she whispers. "Is he coming?"

"But no, he goes on his way, never glancing at Gloucester House, and quite unconscious of the eyes bent on him.

CHAPTER II.

It is an intensely hot day in July; not a breath ripples the shining water, or stirs the leaves upon the trees; the flowers droop their heads under the scorching sun, and the birds forget to sing; but in the fields the reapers bend to their task with heated brows and weary bodies.

The harvest is unusually early, and the farmers are desirous to gather all in before a change of weather comes; so the men have been toiling ever since the first streak of light showed in the summer sky.

Down the river glides a boat with three occupants; it is Felix who holds the sculls, and looks so flushed that he bears small resemblance to his everyday self. Landor is steering; and Poppy, whose face is shaded by a large parasol, sits idly back among her cushions the very picture of indolent enjoyment. She is dressed in white, but at her throat and waist clusters of scarlet poppies seem to flame and burn; her disengaged hand trails through the water, and her pretty eyes take in the beauty of scenery, the loveliness and profusion of the wild flowers.

The open book upon her knee is unheeded, although it is one of the finest novels of the day, and she seems scarcely to notice or remember her companion. They are going to picnic at a place called Rillford, seven miles from Drewminster, and Mrs. Garnet has packed a basket of provisions, which now lies in the bow; and Felix anticipates a very good day despite the presence of young Landor. Just now he rests on his oars, and they drift slowly on, he looking the while into Poppy's pretty, unconscious face.

"What are you thinking of?" he asks, and with a little start she answers,—

"I believe I was not thinking at all; I was simply enjoying myself in an animal sort of way—pleased with the heat and light, and loveliness of the day. Edward," turning to Landor, "you are steering us into the bank. Pull the left rope."

Landor, blushing, obeys her, and again they glide on in silence, so sweet, so languorous, that neither Felix nor Poppy are willing to break it. Landor, however, is not so susceptible to beauty of sky and plain, and asks,—

"How far are we from Rillford?"

"We shall be on it directly," Felix answers, and bends to the oars again. Presently Poppy cries out, disappointedly,—

"Oh, Felix, look!"

He turns his head, and sees a pretty toy steamer lying at a short distance before them.

"Well?" he questions.

"We are forestalled, that is all," the girl says, with melodramatic despair. "There are at least twenty people picnicing in the close. Do you see? The steamer, of course belongs to them."

"Never mind, Poppy, we will go on to Barston; it is only a mile lower down, and a great deal prettier."

"Still I feel defrauded of my rights," she retorts, with a sigh.

"For my own part, I am glad to go on further; I've not forgotten the wretched day I had at Rillford. You remember that Riddledale was with us. I think I felt like a murderer."

"Pray don't recall the follies of that day," with playful contempt. "I only know you behaved more like a savage than a Christian and an Englishman, and I was heartily ashamed of you."

Felix grows hotter under her words, and Landor looks from one to the other with a startled glance.

"Don't be alarmed, Edward," the girl says, lightly, "Mr. Eyre and I are not in earnest; we never are."

"I beg your pardon, Poppy—"

"Pray don't suppose I shall argue the point with you; it's far too hot."

"That's a mean way of getting out of a difficulty," he laughs; but none the less he obeys her.

Two people, sitting on the high bank, hidden from the river by a thick growth of bushes, watch the boat draw near, nearer and still nearer. Underneath the bank is a profusion of forget-me-nots, and Poppy begs her companion to draw in that she may gather some. "Oh, what a pretty girl!" whispers one of the watchers. "Look Herbert, did you ever see more lovely eyes; they're dark as night?"

The man turns his face a little from his companion, that she may not see the sudden and curious pallor upon it.

"Yes, she is pretty," he says, coldly, and then is silent, because the boat has drawn up, just under his resting-place.

Poppy's hands are busy gathering the lovely little blossoms, and Poppy's voice says delightedly,—

"Felix, these are the finest I have seen this season! But, ah! poor things, they will fade before we can reach home."

"They will quickly revive in water," he answers consolingly; "lower down we shall find meadow-sweet and water-lilies, so that you will return laden with spoils."

When she has gathered enough Landor pulls out to the middle of the stream, and they do not pause again until they reach Barston.

The man on the bank rises, and watches the rapidly disappearing boat, with a look of deep and bitter pain gathering in his eyes, and when he can see it no longer throws himself once more upon the grass beside his companion.

"I wonder what is her name, and where her home is?"

"She is Miss Poppy Garnet, of Drewminster."

"The architect's daughter! Oh, Herbert! why did you not make your presence known?"

"Modesty prevented me," with light mockery, "and my intrusion would probably anger the gentleman at the sculls. He is her sworn slave. So, you see, my dear Melody, I acted from self-interested motives."

He speaks lazily, and with the slightest suspicion of a drawl, and yet there is something in his manner which precludes further questioning. The girl, who is fair of face, and has eyes like lobelia, idly plucks the blades of grass around her; her pretty brow wrinkles into a frown, and her mouth is drawn down slightly at the corners, in almost childish perplexity.

"What is the matter, Melody? You look troubled, vexed—"

"I—I am disappointed," she answers, timidly; "very much disappointed."

"In whom? or in what?"

"In our engagement; it isn't at all what I thought it would be."

Mingled pity and amusement shine in his eyes as he bends towards the simple girl, and looks down at her blushing face.

"And what did you suppose it would be?"

It seems hard for her to answer, for she plays nervously with the lace frills of her dress, and her pretty lips quiver, as though she is about to cry. However, she conquers the inclination, and says,—

"I—I thought when we were engaged you would always wish to be with me; that—that you would tell me often you loved me; but things are no different with us than when we were only cousins."

"Do you wish me to swear your frown would

kill me, your anger make my life a waste, howling wilderness? I think that is the way novel heroes talk, but it is a trifle beyond me, I confess. Still, if you will point out my faults as a lover I will try to correct them."

"How can I do that?" she questions, gently. "I know so little about these things—nothing beyond what I have read."

"And novelists, my dear, are given to exaggeration. I have no doubt, Melody, we shall be quite a model couple. Your temper is far too sweet to clash with mine, and I am not quite a bully!"

"Still," she says, softly, "I wish things were different. I—I should like you to tell me I was your—your life, your love; it does not seem like being engaged at all, Herbert. You never tell me of your plans—you never make much of me—and I—I am afraid I like you no better than when we were only cousins."

"Do you mean you *dislike* me, Melody?" with grave eyes fixed upon her.

"No, no," hastily. "I like you very, very much. I know you will be kind and good to me; but—"

"But," he interrupts, gaily, "you have received the poet's words about love unreservedly, and with implicit reliance. The men who wrote such fine sentiments would laugh at your belief. There was Tom Moore; he wrote tender little verses to his wife, and yet left her to drag out a poor existence at home, whilst he flaunted it with the best of company. There was Shelley, who deserted his first wife (she died by her own will, and in greatest poverty) and eloped with a girl of sixteen."

"Don't," the girl pleads; "these things hurt me."

He leans towards her and kisses her lightly upon the cheek.

"We shall be happier than most married folks," he says, gently.

"Do you think so? Sometimes I fancy if our parents had not been so anxious for this marriage we should have loved each other more."

He passes his arm about her, and his eyes speak nothing now but pity for this lovely, innocent girl.

"You must dismiss such thoughts, my dear; and Heaven knows I will do my best to make you happy. Kiss me as an earnest that you believe me?"

She lifts her pretty lips to his, and kisses him, not passionately or coyly, but very much as a matter of course, and as she has been accustomed to do since the very early days of her life.

Then the man says,—

"Let us be going; our absence will be noticed, and we shall have to endure any amount of badinage."

He assists her to rise, and they walk slowly back to the merry group in the close.

Hot as it is some one has proposed a dance, and as Herbert and his companion draw near a young man comes forward.

"Oh! Rithdale, you hate dancing, I know, so I feel no compunction in stealing Miss Berthold from you. Miss Berthold, will you give me this mazurka?"

A faint tinge of colour steals into the fair face, and the blue eyes brighten, but she asks, demurely,—

"Where is the band, Mr. Blake?"

"Oh! Holder is going to whistle for us," laughing; "will you come?"

She glances at Herbert, whose eyes smile consent, and so joins the dance with Thornton Blake.

He holds her very closely to him, and his breath comes hard and fast, as he clasps her little hand, but he contrives to ask an orthodox question,—

"Where have you been hiding yourself? I've been seeking you everywhere."

"Herbert and I strolled down to the river," she answers, and in her innocence she does not guess why she should think all things fairer than they had seemed an hour ago.

"Mr. Rithdale monopolizes all your time," jealously, "but of course that is his right. May I ask when the wedding is to take place?"

"Oh, not yet, not yet!" she answers, with sudden alarm, "not for a very long while. We—we are neither of us anxious to hasten it."

A smile of mingled triumph and joy lights up the young man's face, and he holds her closer yet.

"If I were so happy as to win you I should not rest content until you were really my wife, lest some other fellow should steal you from me."

She looks up startled, and he goes on, daringly,—

"Did you never think that another man might love you, infinitely better than Herbert Rithdale, who is little better than a living iceberg?"

"Oh, hush!" she says. "I must not listen to you; he would be angry."

"But you are not," confidently. "Miss Berthold—Melody."

Here Mr. Holder ceases to whistle, and the mazurka closes abruptly, so that Thornton Blake is compelled to lead his companion back to Rithdale.

She is flushed with rapid motion, and trembling with a new and vague delight she does not understand, but the poor little thing's conscience is uneasy. It tells her she has been acting treacherously to Herbert, and she strives to recompense him by added tenderness and humility, which touch him to pity for her, far keener than the pity he has for himself.

Meanwhile Poppy and her companions have reached Barston, and Felix ties the boat up under a willow, and all step out on to the fresh green bank.

The girl busies herself with spreading out the feast upon a white cloth, whilst Landor draws the corks from the lemonade bottles.

The meal which follows is a very lively one. Poppy is aroused from her idleness, Felix is in riotous spirits, and even Landor adds something to the general merriment.

When it is ended, the girl packs the crockery into the basket, and gives the fragments of food to two small boys, who in passing regarded them wistfully; then she takes up her position in the boat; Felix lies on the bank beside her, and Landor hastens off to hunt for wild flowers for his little friend.

"This is jolly!" Felix says, glancing under the sunshade at the pretty piquante face. "I could stay here for ever; that is, under these circumstances."

"You remind me of the lotos-eaters, and your wish is hardly worthy you. If it could be granted you would soon regret it. You would weary of the shining river, the green banks, and changeless blue of the summer sky."

"But I should never weary of you," leaning forward to look into her eyes, but they are hidden by the long, black lashes.

She laughs a trifle awkwardly—a rare thing in her—and says,—

"That was a pretty speech, but not so neatly turned as it might have been."

"I cannot stay to choose my words when I am with you!" quickly. "I am not myself then, I lose my self-control; I am full of a nameless, restless joy, which is almost as much pain as joy."

She turns a white face upon him.

"Hush!" she cries, sharply; "I do not wish to listen to such folly. Why will you spoil my day?"

He rises and walks to and fro agitatedly, then comes back to her again, and entering the boat sits down before her.

"Week after week, month after month," he says, in a constrained voice, "you have pretended not to read my heart, and when I have hinted my love you have answered carelessly, feigning ignorance of my true meaning; but my patience is ended, my love cries aloud to

be heard. Poppy! oh, my darling; you *must* listen now!"

She trembles and grows faint with fear, for his passion is overpowering, and she pities him, ah! how intensely. She knows so well what pain she can inflict upon his honest heart, and all her woman's nature calls to her to forget self, and have compassion on her lover. She finds no word to say, and encouraged by her silence Felix goes on,—

"As yet I have done nothing to recommend myself to your notice. I am unknown to the world, but if you will give me your love I shall rise to higher things. You shall make me all that your heart can desire. With your help I shall grow strong and bold to fight my way upward; if troubles come I will bear them singly, so that none shall weigh upon your dear heart. I will surround your life with love, and be your slave, body and soul."

She stretches one hand entreatingly to him.

"Oh! I do not press this suit upon me. I have tried not to see your love, but I have failed; then I have comforted myself with the hope that soon your passion would die out, as it will—as it will, for are not all men fickle? Do not all men love best the thing they do not possess, and scorn the thing they have? Oh! believe me, believe me, Felix, you do not know what you ask. You are led on by a delusive desire."

"Hear me," he cries, catching her white hand in his, "hear me, my darling! I am not one lightly to woo, or quickly to change. My nature turns to you with all its force, and without you my life will be a wasted one. I shall sink to a lower level than that on which I now stand."

"It is cruel to urge that upon me," she cries, bitterly, "to place me, as it were, in the wrong; but it is man's way, and it is woman's lot to suffer it."

Her eyes fill with tears, and all her pretty colour fades from her cheeks.

"You frighten me," she says, after a pause, "You lay your possible failure at my door. Tell me what you would have me do?"

"I would not have you answer too hastily, lest you should condemn me to hopelessness; neither would I have you take too long a time in which to consider your decision, because the suspense will be almost intolerable to me. Love, love, let my passion move you to kindness. I know that as yet you regard me only as a friend; but when you have given me permission to speak I will win you to a deeper, tenderer way of thought. I have not much to offer you. I have only a small annuity; but I can work, and I will!"

He looks up and sees Landor coming through the meadow, his hands filled with poppies, corn-flowers, and dog-daisies; and feeling the time is short, he pleads,—

"Give me my answer, dear."

She neither moves nor speaks, and he pleads again,—

"Have pity, Poppy; remember you are more than life itself to me."

"Wait," she says, in a breathless way, "wait until to-morrow. I am frightened. I dare not answer now," but something in her manner bids him hope.

He grasps her little fingers more tightly.

"Try to answer as I desire," he implores.

"I will; indeed, I will," she replies, and sinks back amongst the cushions, paler than usual, and not a little agitated.

Then Landor comes up, and casts his floral offering into her lap, and she contrives to thank him in her usual pretty way; and as the hot, golden hours wear by she struggles to regain her composure, and appear as though nothing of moment had occurred. But her heart is sick with fear; if she refuses to listen to Eyre's entreaty she wastes his whole life (has he not said so?), and if she consents she will bring deep pain upon herself.

Poor little Poppy! no wonder that her courage fails her.

Evening comes at last. A slight breeze has risen, and ripples the water, plays amongst the trees, sighs through the rushes and wild

flowers, fans Poppy's heated face, and blows her short curls in a pretty tangle over her brow and about her cheeks.

Felix thinks she has never looked so lovely as now, with that shade of thought in her eyes, that suggestion of timidity in her manner. She does not even glance at him, looks anywhere rather than into his face, talks with Landor rather than himself, and toys languidly with her flowers.

As they draw near Rillford the merry party they had passed in the morning is crowding into the steamer, which is ablaze with lights; but a bend in the river hides the vessel from Felix, and he says,—

"Sing to us, Poppy; it is just the hour for music."

"What shall I sing?" and her sweet voice sounds constrained.

He cannot see her now for the fast gathering gloom. There is no moon, and the stars have not yet studded the clear blue sky.

"What shall I sing?" she asks again, with a touch of impatience in her tone.

"That pretty song of Beranger's, please."

Then through the stillness of the evening her clear voice rings out,—

"She is so pretty, the girl I love,

Her eyes are tender and deep, and blue

As the summer night in the skies above,

As violets seen through a mist of dew.

How can I hope then her heart to gain?

She is so pretty, and I am so plain."

"Hush," says one on the steamer, "what a lovely voice!"

As the words reach them, Thornton Blake presses Melody's hand in a close clasp; and the poor little soul, bewildered by new and incomprehensible feelings, does not withdraw her fingers from his, does not utter any word of remonstrance or anger.

No one looks at Herbert Rithdale, which perhaps is well, for his face has grown ashen in its pallor, his eyes gleam fiercely, and his teeth are clenched.

The voice draws nearer; there is no splash of oars, for Felix rests upon his sculls that he may not interrupt the song.

"She is so pretty, so fair to see;

Scarcely she's counted her nineteenth
spring,

Fresh and blooming, and young. Ah! me

Why do I thus her praises sing?

Sure'y from me 'tis a senseless strain,

She is so pretty, and I am so plain."

Herbert Rithdale sits well in the shadow, or the knotted veins upon his temples, the clenched hands, might tell a story which is best hidden away from sight.

"She is so pretty, so sweet, so dear,

There's many a lover who loves her well!

I may not hope, I can only fear,

Yet shall I venture my love to tell?

Ah! I have pleaded, and not in vain,

Though she's so pretty, and I am so plain."

The song ceases, and the boat drifts on its way, passes the steamer, from which many faces peer through the darkness to see the singer; and she goes on her way unconscious of Herbert's wild anguish, or the straining eyes which seek to follow her through the deepening twilight. Ah! 'tis sad! So near, and yet so far!

CHAPTER III.

EVENING; and the little back garden of Gloucester House is full of the fragrance of flowers and the droning of gnats. It is past nine, and a soft, sweet gloaming has fallen over Drewminster. Just beyond the cathedral spires a little crescent moon is emerging from behind a veil of rosy clouds; the stars are coming out in myriads, and the blue of the summer sky has faded to sea-green, save where it seems to join and melt into the earth, and there it is delicate lilac and pale yellow.

Under a weeping ash sits Poppy, heedless

of all sweet sights and sounds, all subtle and heavy odours; her hands are idly crossed upon her lap, and her face is more thoughtful than is its wont; in the deep, dark eyes is a look of wondering pain, and a certain something closely allied to fear.

A step sounds close beside her, but she does not turn her pretty head; she knows well enough it is Felix, and that he is coming for her answer to his question. She shivers a little, although the night is warm, and when he joins her she does not even glance at him.

"So I have found you at last, my love!" and sitting down beside her he imprisons her little hand in his. They are not steady now, and they are icy cold. "You have had time for thought," he says, tenderly, "the whole long day—it has been a weary one to me. Poppy, are you going to make me happy?"

The pretty face is very pale, the usually firm lips tremulous, but her eyes meet his steadily, as she asks,—

"If it were really for your good I should say yes? Ah! I wish I could know! I wish I could know!"

"Your love would be the crown and blessing of my life."

She shakes her head incredulously.

"You think so now, but will you always be of the same opinion?"

"Yes," he answers stoutly, "as I love you now I shall love you always."

"I don't know what I have done," she says, sighing, "to win your love; but I do know I do not deserve it, and I did not desire it. I want to be very frank with you; there must be no mistake about my meaning, I would not for worlds mislead you. I like you very—very much, but I do not love you. I should prefer to remain free, but—but—oh! don't look so grieved. Hear me out. If you cannot be happy without me, if you are content to take me as I am, knowing all, I will marry you."

"Oh! my dear! my dear!" He catches her to him, and rains his burning kisses on cheek, and lip, and throat; but she lies passive in his arms, neither resisting nor returning his caresses. "It shall be the work of my life to make you glad," he says, when joy will permit him to speak. "Poppy, kiss me."

She lifts her face to his; it gleams white in the twilight, and her eyes are bright with bitter pain.

"Did you ever kiss any other man—as your lover, I mean?"

"No," she answers, with perfect truth, but she thinks of one who had kissed her many times under a starry sky, and who is dearer to her than all the world beside. A little later she says,—

"Let us go in, Felix; mamma will wonder where I am."

So he leads her in to the pretty sitting-room where her parents are.

"Mr. Garnet," he says, with the frankness which is his chief charm. "Poppy has promised to marry me. I know she deserves a better fellow, but no one will love her more truly, or be a more affectionate son to you than I."

Mr. Garnet shakes hands with him, and pats Poppy's curly head with a loving look, but, to tell the truth, he is a trifle disappointed. He had hoped greater things for "his girl," but his wife shows by her expression that she more than approves the engagement.

"My dear Felix," she says, in a happier voice than is usual with her, "I am very glad my child has won the love of so good a man."

Then she takes Poppy into her arms and kisses her (an unprecedented action). "My dear," she whispers, "you are a happy girl."

Her daughter breaks away from her with a sob, and runs from the room, but no one attributes her emotion to grief—of course she is excited and unnerved by the event of the evening, and she will be better alone.

Alone! Yes, she has locked herself in her room, and is down upon her face, moaning and writhing, whispering one loved name again and again, afraid to speak it aloud, lest she should publish her grief, and what she thinks

of her shame, for Poppy is proud; but not all her pride can heal her wound, or still the cry which rises from her heart, "Herbert! Herbert! oh! my love, my dear love!"

To-morrow she will be brave, to-morrow she will put him from her thoughts, her love; but to-night is her own, in which to lament, to weep as if her heart will break, to call on him who cannot hear, and hearing durst not answer, because of the bonds which fetter him, and hold her pledged to another.

She goes down in the morning heavy-eyed and pale, declaring her head aches badly; but she received the congratulations of White and Rae with smiling face and gracious speech, and applies herself to her work, as though she had but one day in which to complete it.

But from this time there is a distinct change in her; her gaiety is more forced, her temper less even, and it is evident to Mr. Garnet she is not so happy in her engagement as she had been before.

"Perhaps she dislikes being fettered," he thinks, "and all right-minded girls are more thoughtful when engaged."

Felix himself is thoroughly happy, and much as he loves the girl seems quite unaware of any change in her. With him she is always gentle, always sympathetic, enters heartily into all his plans, shares his walks, lingers with him in the pretty garden, and her cheek is no paler, her eyes are not less bright.

Day by day she instructs young Landor, breaks down the barrier his shyness has raised between himself and the other pupils; is so kind, so good to him that the boy speedily feels a dog-like affection for her, follows her movements with worshipping eyes, is eager to serve her, until his devotion becomes a standing joke with White and Rae.

He appears very unhappy when he sees her with Felix, on whom he scowls malignantly, because he believes he has done him a great wrong. The kindness of his young instructor misleads him, and he already imagines that but for Eyre she might be his, and fancies himself in love with her.

One morning they two are alone together in the "office," and Edward has striven vainly to copy a plan before him. At last he asks her help. She goes to his side, and leaning over him, rapidly erases his irregular lines, putting in correct and steady ones. As she bends down her face is on a level with his, he feels her warm, sweet breath upon his cheek, and the silly lad's heart leaps within him. When her hand accidentally touches his he loses his self-control, and suddenly leaning nearer, kisses her upon the brow,

In a moment she lifts herself erect.

"Landor," she says, coldly, "you forget yourself."

"No, I don't," he answers, bluntly, "I love you, and I'm very miserable."

She laughs out gaily, feeling ridicule is the best antidote she can offer.

"You silly boy! what do you know of love? How dare you speak of it to me—you, who are but just promoted to coats, whilst I am a woman (she is only nineteen, and looks younger). Come Edward, let us join together to forget this folly; you are much too young even to think of love, and I am an engaged girl."

"I love you," he says, sullenly, "and I don't see why you should laugh at me for it."

She places her hands on his shoulders, and turns his face towards herself.

"You ridiculous boy; if you were a little younger I would shake you."

"It's all very well for you to laugh," he says, stamping his foot angrily, "but you have encouraged me to think you—you thought kindly of me."

She moves from him, a deep flush on her face.

"I am sorry I have bestowed any thought or care upon you," she says, coldly. "Had you been older I should not have done so, but I believed your youth would not allow you to entertain any foolish ideas."

July 25, 1885.

The lad droops his head sullenly, and will not look at her. She mounts her stool and begins to work with almost violent energy; presently Landor says,—

"I didn't mean to make you angry."

"You have said enough," coldly. "I wish to hear no more on that subject;" and when Felix enters she turns to him with a careless smile....

"Will you take Edward under your charge, he is getting beyond me?" and to the boy's misery he has a new teacher.

For a few days he avoids her, cannot meet the clear gaze of her lovely eyes, but after a while his embarrassment wears away, and the old friendly relations are resumed between them, and Edward is perhaps the better for the salutary punishment his pride has received.

At first he is sulky, but Poppy's invariable good temper breaks through his sullen mood, and, overcoming his sickly sentiment, he acknowledges to himself that her friendship is very good, and that he will be the better for it all his life long.

At the close of August Mr. Garnet and Felix are called to town on business, and Poppy congratulates herself that she will have two days of perfect freedom; she even lays aside her betrothal ring that her liberty may seem more real.

In the morning she goes into Drewminster to make some small purchases, and as she enters a chemist's Herbert Rithdale and a lady issue from it. In her sudden confusion she forgets to bow, but Rithdale is not so remiss. With a frigid recognition he passes on; the lady catches his arm, and says quite audibly,—

"Oh, Herbert! that is pretty Miss Garnet, please introduce me."

"That is impossible, my dear Melody; we are scarcely on speaking terms, as you saw just now."

"Did you quarrel with her at any time?"

"No, but her conduct annoyed me," he answers quietly, and they go on their way.

Presently Poppy emerges from the druggist's, and gives one swift glance after their retreating figures.

"So that is Miss Berthold, the woman he is to marry. It is an easy journey from Cumbertgate to here, but if he had any sense of shame, or any feeling of pity for me, he would not come so often." Then she walks homedeketedly, and her engagement to Felix weighs momentarily more heavily upon her. Oh! she cannot go through with it, she loves that other man so dearly. Would it not be a sin to marry Eyre?

In the evening she walks through some adjoining meadows; lingering often to gather flowers, staying at the stiles, sometimes casting pebbles into the little brook in sheer idleness. The gathering shadows warn her at last that night is coming on, and she turns homewards with a weary sigh, her mind all full of other days and of the "lovesome traitor" she fain would forget, but cannot. Once she turns her head, and as if her thoughts have conjured him before her eyes, sees him coming towards her.

In an instant she tries to increase the distance between them, hoping that if he sees she does not recognise her; but her swiftest steps are slow compared to his, and he gains visibly and easily upon her.

She knows it is useless to go on, and yet she will not confess herself beaten by pausing. Nearer and nearer those well-known footsteps come; now she can hear his deep-drawn breaths, and she grows sick and faint; her trembling limbs refuse to carry her on, and she stands helpless, shivering, afraid, unable to look at or speak to him.

"Miss Garnet—Poppy!" — his voice is stirred with some strong emotion, and the face bent upon her is very white and stern—"why are you so anxious to avoid me?"

She moves her hands helplessly, but does not answer; and that low, refined voice, which has lost its habitual drawl, goes on,—

"I am perfectly aware my very presence annoys you, but seeing you here and alone I ventured to hasten after you, to offer my—my congratulations on your approaching marriage."

The great brown eyes, wide with anguish, are lifted now to his, and the girl says, steadily,—

"I should be flattered by your haste to do so. Who told you of—of my engagement?"

"White; I met him yesterday."

She makes no response this time, and a heavy silence falls upon them; she looks down and draws lines upon the gravel path with the point of her sunshade; he keeps his dark eyes bent intently upon her face, noting pitilessly her confusion, and her longing to leave him.

"Are you well?" he says at last, trying to keep the tenderness out of his tones.

"Yes, Mr. Rithdale. I am anxious to get home; it is growing dark."

He hardly seems to hear her, as almost unconsciously he lessens the distance between them.

"Tell me truly," he says, in intense tones, "are you happy?"

"Perfectly!" and then her eyes meet his, and there is a defiant light in them; "why should you have any doubt about my happiness?"

"I do not know," weakly, "you women are strange creatures. I thought, perhaps, some memory of the past might come to disturb your peace."

"How dare you speak to me so?" passionately, "what is there in my past to rob me of pleasure or rest?"

"You should surely know," he answers, coldly, "but if your memory fails to recall anything to you that it were best to forget I will not do so."

"I appreciate your consideration," she retorts, bitterly; and after a pause, "I, too, must congratulate you on your coming wedding; your bride is very lovely, you are an extremely fortunate man."

"Very!" sardonically, "but like most folks I am not always content with my lot—few men are, and I would not be in a shameful minority."

"And yet," she says, "you have always prided yourself on your distinct individuality."

"That was a foolish thing to do; in the last three months I have got my corners rubbed off, and am in a fair way to live down my reputation for eccentricity;" then abruptly,

"Is Mrs. Garnet well?"

"Thank you, yes."

"I would call upon her, but I think it wiser not to do so. She has a claim upon my gratitude, which I have no hope of repaying."

Poppy scarcely hears his words, or she might wonder at them, for Mrs. Garnet is not in the habit of doing little services for others.

"Mr. Rithdale," she says at last, "will you tell me why you left us so hurriedly, and why, after all our friendship, you did not wish me good-bye?"

He looks at her with gathering scorn in his eyes, and quivering at his fine lips; then he answers coldly, and in guarded tones, "If I thought an explanation necessary I would give it—but I do not, and I would rather you had not asked it."

The little breeze goes sighing round them, murmuring through the trees; the gnats still drone above and about them; the grasshopper chirps at their feet; but these are the only sounds they hear. Poppy moves impatiently, but that he will not look at her, he would see a story of love and anguish in her eyes, on her wild, white face.

"I am going," she says, "and I should like to think we parted friends. Will you shake hands and wish me good-bye?"

Just a moment he hesitates, whilst the passion so long repressed cries urgently to be satisfied; and suddenly the strong man's strength fails him, and he catches the girl to him, and holds her close to his heart, whilst

he kisses her madly. She does not struggle or cry out; half-fainting she lies in his arms, feels his breath hot upon her cheek, the pressure of his lips to hers, and a gasping sigh breaks from her. "Good-bye," he says, "love, love, good-bye!" and then, as if ashamed of his passion, he releases her, almost thrusts her away, and strides off in an opposite direction. She stands white and cold, watching his swiftly retreating figure, and when she can no longer see him, kneels down beside the stile, and breaks into passionate weeping.

"Oh love! love!" she sobes, "what does it all mean? What have I done that you should be so cruel?"

After a long, long while she rises, and walks slowly and drearily home. Her mother meets her in the garden.

"Where have you been, Poppy?" she asks, in a displeased tone.

"Through the meadows. I think I have walked too far, for my head aches frightfully. I shall go to bed at once."

"I think," remarks Mrs. Garnet, with great acidity, "you might have some consideration for me; you know how lonely I am in your father's absence, and yet you leave me for hours."

"I am very sorry, mamma," in the same weary tone. "I did not mean to be unkind," and she goes into the house, and climbs the stairs to her own room, and shutting herself in, breaks again into bitter weeping. Far into the night her sighs disturb the stillness, her tears stain her pretty cheeks, and when exhausted with weeping, she lies looking out on the summer sky, with its glittering stars; thoughts of the past, and of the man she loves, fit through her aching brain. She knows it is madness to remember him, feels she is wronging Felix; but when could thought be controlled, or love reasoned away?

She recalls every little incident of her intercourse with Herbert Rithdale—from the day of his arrival to that on which he left hurriedly, as she had said, and without any good-bye to her.

She had spent such happy days with him; and at first she had wondered why his voice, his touch, should thrill her, as poor Eyre's had never done in all the long months of their friendship.

Herbert had sat beside her in the "office," been her companion in her walks, lent her books, lingered by her while she sang, and she had been so happy that she had forgotten Felix and his pain.

Thinking of these things now she clenches her little hands, and sets her teeth to keep back the ready sobs.

Will she ever forget the moonlit night, when they lingered together in the garden; and after a long, sweet silence, he had suddenly caught her to him, and kissing her, whispered words of love? She was a trifle afraid—there was such a wide gulf between them; and beside that, she had heard it said he was to marry his cousin Melody Berthold, the richest heiress for miles round.

But soon swallowed fear, and she was ready to forego everything for his sake; still, although she permitted his caresses, she never returned them; because, although he loved her, he was not yet bound by any tie to her.

The weeks had worn by slowly enough for Felix, but to her they seemed to fly, so full were they of happiness.

No one but Felix suspected their love, they were allowed unrestricted freedom of intercourse.

Then came a still sweet evening, when Herbert spoke gravely of the future, and indulged in suggestions of wedded bliss—wedded love; and she had gone to her room full of passionate thanksgiving to Heaven for the unutterable blessing it had showered upon her.

She rose up in the morning with a light heart, and ran downstairs singing. Felix met her on her way to the sitting-room.

"How gay you are, Poppy?" he had said,

"and you have quite forgotten the old proverb, 'Sing before breakfast, cry before night.' In the gladness of her heart she laughed; what harm could chance to her whilst Herbert loved her?

After breakfast she tripped into the "office." He was there alone.

"I forgot to tell you," she said, "that I am to spend the day with my godmother; papa is going to drive me there, and we start in half-an-hour."

Then he had taken her in his arms, and had kissed her pretty lips, and scolded her playfully for leaving him lonely, and begged her to return as early as possible. She had done so, and as she entered the garden her mother met her.

"I've news for you," she said; "Mr. Rithdale has left us; after dinner he seemed very strange, and in the middle of the afternoon he came to me as I sat sewing, and said he wished to settle accounts, as he was leaving by the five train. Of course I was surprised."

"Isn't he coming back?" Poppy questioned, with paled lips, and she was glad the darkness hid her anguished face.

"He said not."

"Did he leave no message for me?" with wistful longing in her voice, and a terrible, sick dread tearing at her heart-strings.

"None."

"That was scarcely courteous," she answered, and then crept away to hide her bitter pain and shame.

So he had been playing with her, and perhaps fearing some catastrophe had hastened away at the earliest available opportunity, caring nothing about her broken heart. And remembering these things, the girl cries out upon him for mercy.

CHAPTER IV.

"I WONDER," Melody says thoughtfully, "you did not fall in love with Miss Garnet; you had an immensity of time in which to do so."

Herbert smiles down at the pretty face, "My dear child, had I not you to think of? She makes a disdaining little moue."

"I was away long enough for you to forget me, and you know you were never violently in love with me; besides which Miss Garnet is so much prettier than I."

"There may be a difference of opinion even about that," he answers. "I've heard fellows rave about you often, and you're good little soul—you are never petulant or exacting."

"Yes, my virtues are all of a negative order. I don't feel flattered by your last remark; it means simply there is no character in me worth mentioning."

"You never flirt," he goes on, coolly disregarding her words, "of which fact I am glad, for I hate a coquette."

Melody blushes brightly, and looks confused, but after a pause, in which she studies her embroidery, and Herbert his book, she resumes the conversation.

"I'm only a commonplace sort of person at best; you ought to have chosen a different woman for your wife. Now Miss Garnet—"

"Why will you harp upon that string so persistently?" Herbert asks petulantly; "I've told you she is going to marry Felix Byre."

"He looks nice, but not the sort of man for her; she ought to have a very superior being for her husband."

"After what you have been pleased to say I must regard that as a compliment," he says, smiling a little.

"It isn't just that one girl should have all good things and another so few. I should like to change places with the architect's daughter."

"I don't think you would; she works very hard, scarcely ever goes into society, has an extremely querulous mother, a very moderate supply of pretty clothes, and a still smaller supply of cash. You, on the other hand, do not know what labour is, are constantly drinking deeply at the fountains of pleasure, have

only an indulgent father to please, and an unlimited allowance, with all the other things the feminine mind holds dear."

"Still I would change with her; my prettiness is like a piece of Dresden china—pink and white, blue and gold—no deep, warm tints. Why, I hate to pass a toy shop or German fair, for all the dolls have pink and white complexions, blue, staring eyes, and yellow hair. Each is a hideous comment on myself."

The young man leans back, and laughs in earnest; but the girl goes on discontentedly.

"Now, Miss Garnet is all warmth and richness of colour. She reminds me of a firefly—she is so bright, and yet she looks such a cosy, comfortable little soul—and—and—this falteringly—"she might choose her own husband."

Herbert sighs, as he leans forward and lays one hand upon the girl's.

"My dear"—very gently—"aren't you satisfied with me? Don't you think I shall do my best to make you happy?"

"It isn't that, but I would rather you should have chosen me than I should be forced upon or offered to you. Why weren't we allowed a voice in the matter?"

"If you find me so loathsome there is no need to go through with the engagement. Heaven forbid you should marry me and repent the step."

"You aren't loathsome to me," she answers, lifting her pretty lips to his to be kissed, "but sometimes, when I think of the future, I am afraid I shall never be able to satisfy you, because you are so clever, and then perhaps you will grow tired of me and hate me. I think my beauty (as you please to call it) will soon fade; blondes soon get *blase*, and at thirty I shall be ugly."

Something evidently distresses her greatly, and the young man throws an arm about her, and speaks soothingly as to a child.

She hides her face on his breast, but he does not clasp her closely to him. He looks down on the pretty figure and bowed head with a sort of yearning pity, and at last he says,—

"Poor little soul! poor little soul! Melody, our wedding was arranged to take place next November, but I won't hurry you. Let us postpone it until you are quite sure that it is for your happiness to marry me."

The tears are in her pretty eyes as she lifts them to him.

"You are very, very good," she says, gratefully, "and I don't know how to thank you. But it is useless to propose putting off our wedding—papa would not consent to it."

"I think he will if I state your wishes to him."

"Oh, he is very indulgent to me in small things; but he can be, and often is, very obstinate in what he considers important matters. Tell me, Herbert"—this wistfully—"do you really wish me to be your wife? If you had chosen for yourself would you have chosen me? No, no!"—as he hesitates to answer—"your eyes tell me you would not; whatever your lips may say they will speak the truth. Oh! I have pained you, cousin—as his face shadows—"but I will try to atone for that to-night. I will be all docility, all anxiety to please. Now go, or you will be late for your appointment. Do you forget you were to meet Mr. Jackson at three?—it is already past the hour. Oh! you forgetful Herbert!" and she pushes him gently from the room.

When he has been gone a short time she rises, and dressing goes out into the adjacent wood. She walks slowly, and her face is very thoughtful—almost sad. There is a vague yearning in her heart for something to complete her life—a fear, too, that her marriage with her cousin will prevent her ever attaining it, and the pretty brow is marked with lines of perplexity, the blue eyes are troubled as a child's.

A step amongst the dead leaves and twigs startles her, and brings the rosy colour into her cheeks, and when a man's voice speaks her

name she turns, trembling and ashamed to meet—Thornton Blake.

"I hoped I should find you here," he cries, eager love in his tones; "but I did not hope for such good fortune as this. How is it you are alone?"

"Herbert has gone to keep an appointment with Mr. Jackson."

"My blessing on Mr. Jackson! Are you glad to see me, Melody?"

"Oh!" she says, "you must not speak to me thus!" and her voice, like her face, is very troubled.

"Why not? Because you are bound to Rithdale by bonds not of your own seeking?—because your father wishes this marriage? Tell me, Melody, would you have chosen your cousin of your own free will?"

"No," very lowly, very faintly. "Oh, please, do not ask me more! I must not—must not answer, or forget Herbert—he is so very good to me! I would not hurt him!"

"But does he love you?"

"This is cruel! Have pity, Mr. Blake!"

"Why should you sacrifice yourself and me to a parent's wish?"

He has taken her hands in his, and he bends over her with all a lover's tenderness. She shivers as if with cold, and he, made bolder by her silence, goes on,—

"Melody, my dearest dear! come to me! I have most need of you."

It wanted but those few words to tell her for what she yearned, to waken the sleeping passion in her heart.

With a low cry she draws her fingers from his clasp, and, covering her face, weeps pitifully, but cannot rebuke him.

In an instant his arms are about her, he has drawn her hands from her face, and now kisses the pretty, tremulous lips and tear-stained cheeks.

"Sweetheart, you are more than life itself to me!"

She can hold out no longer. Poor, pretty, timid little thing, with sudden forgetfulness of Herbert, her father's anger, of all, save Thornton, she cries,—

"Oh, I love you! I love you! And now what shall I do?"

"Kiss me first, love!" he says, audaciously, and she has no power left to refuse him this favour.

She clings about him, half-weeping, half-laughing; very much afraid, but very glad.

The short September afternoon wanes, the sun is sinking behind the woods, and at last the girl lifts her head from its resting-place.

"I dare not stay longer! Papa will be sending Thomas to look for me, or—or Herbert will return, and then—"

She pauses in fear and trembling.

"And then they will learn the truth," he says, with a careless laugh, "and I do not care how soon."

"I am afraid. Thornton, do you think papa will be very angry, or Herbert very hurt?"

"No, love." But he does not speak truth now lest he shall alarm the timid girl still more. "You must not fear the results; and whatever happens you will still have me to decline upon. Neither your father's anger nor Rithdale's would influence me in the least."

"But I am very weak," she says, pitifully. "If they should coerce my will—if they should force me into a marriage which I now know I should loathe—"

"They shall not do that, my bonnibelle. Having won you I will not lose you; you are my very life. What! crying, my dear?" and he kisses away her tears. "Now, I will not let you go until you are like your dear and smiling self. Sweetheart, I shall see your father to-night, and when I have told him how dear we are to each other he will give you to me, because your happiness is so precious to him."

"I wish I could think so, Thornton; but if he should refuse?"

"Then we must act without his consent or knowledge, for I swear I will never give you up. It is getting cold, and you, poor child, are trembling with fear. I will not keep you longer, but you must meet me here to-morrow if things do not go well with us."

"Let me speak to my father to-night, and prepare him for your coming. He can break the news to Herbert, and, if he is not very angry, I will write you to call in the morning. Do not refuse my request—for—for the sake of my love."

"When you speak like that, and look at me with such tenderness in your eyes, I am ready to grant you anything."

And then, with a long and passionate kiss, they part, and the girl goes rustling through the dead leaves and broken twigs, her poor little heart fluttering with conflicting emotions, in which love for Thornton and regret for Herbert are most prominent. The latter does not return to dinner, for which Melody is very thankful; and in the evening, when, by her singing and sundry delicate attentions she has made a good impression on the paternal heart, she seats herself on her father's knees, and nervously introduces the subject.

"Papa, should you be *very* sorry if I did not marry Herbert?"

"Sorry!—that isn't the word for what I should feel. I have always set my heart upon seeing your cousin's wife."

"But if I knew it would not be for our mutual happiness?"

"You will allow me to be the best judge of that, Melody," he says, coldly. "You are talking very foolishly; you displease me greatly."

"Did not you exercise your own will when you married mamma?"

"That has nothing to do with your case. I was a man of tolerably mature years when I met your mother, and quite capable of choosing wisely."

Melody sighs.

"What are your reasons for coercing my will?"

He frowns at her.

"That is a hard and ungrateful term to apply to my care of and for you. I am not a strong man, and my hold on life may be loosened any moment; before I die I should like to see you happily married, because your fortune will make you desirable prey to hosts of adventurers, and, if left to yourself, you would probably marry the worst of the crew."

"Papa," she says, very timidly; "I cannot marry Herbert—I do not love him."

Mr. Berthold thrusts her from his knee.

"What has love to do with it, you little fool? Have you told your cousin this?"

"No;" trembling, and beginning to cry.

"And it will be best not to do so. May I ask upon whom you condescend to smile?" he questions, scoffingly.

"Oh, papa! I did not know. We could not tell that we should love each other. I thought we were only friends, but to-day I have learned I cannot be happy without him."

"And who is the lucky man?" with darkening brow.

"Thornton Blake," and she sways forward like a reed in the wind, but she lays her hands upon the table to steady herself, and tries to hear what her father is saying, which is hard work for the singing in her ears.

"So he has been scoundrel enough to address you as a lover, and you have so far forgotten your dignity and honour as to listen to him? I am surprised and disappointed in you."

"Oh, papa! papa dear, don't be so angry with me. I could not help it—it is not my fault I am engaged to Herbert."

"Silence!" he thunders. "I will settle matters with Mr. Thornton myself. You can go to your room and remain there until I send for you."

Weak in some things, she is strong in her lover's defence, and now she lifts her head. Her blue eyes flash, and her voice is steady and sharp as she says,—

"You cannot accuse Mr. Thornton of being an adventurer. His position is as good as mine, and his rent-roll a large one."

Her audacity surprises Mr. Berthold, and holds him silent a moment, but soon he bursts out, angrily,—

"It is my will you should marry your cousin; by such an alliance the two estates will be annexed."

"I won't marry him," she cries, driven to bay, "and I will appeal to him to release me."

"Go to your room," threateningly, and without another word she obeys him.

All night the poor little soul lies trembling and crying; very much afraid to trust her own force of will, if Herbert proves intractable as her father. She is glad when morning comes, because, although she may not leave her room, it seems less lonely than at night. Her breakfast is brought to her by a neat maid, who carries her a message from Herbert, to the effect that he is grieved to hear of her indisposition, and she knows by this her father has told him nothing yet.

About eleven Mr. Berthold sallies out, looking very stern and scornful, and he turns his steps in the direction of "The Hollow," where Mr. Blake resides in bachelor splendour. No sooner is he well out of sight than Melody flies downstairs to the study, where she is certain of finding Herbert. He looks up as she enters with a kindly smile, and seeing how pale she is, and how heavy her eyes, rises, and placing a chair for her, says,—

"I think, my dear, you would be better lying down. You look very ill this morning."

"Oh, don't mind my looks. I've something to say to you and very little time to say it in, because papa will be back presently, and he told me last night I was to keep my room. He is very angry with me, and all my hopes rest now on you. Herbert, dear cousin, I want you to give me my freedom. I—I—forgive me—I cannot marry you."

His first feeling is not one of relief, because, although he does not love her, it is not pleasant to be jilted; and he is a little sore, as the thought flashes through his brain,—

"Poppy played with me, Melody jilts me—the love of woman is not for me."

Then as the sound of his cousin's sobs smite on his ear he forgets his personal discomfiture, and laying a strong, white hand upon each of her shoulders, says,—

"There shall be no compulsion, my dear; try to tell me quietly all about it."

At the unexpected gentleness of his words, his voice, she looks up,—

"I'm a poor little thing at the best, and I should spoil your life, because I can't enter into your thoughts, or love the things you love; but he is content with me as I am. He doesn't see how foolish I am."

He smiles a trifle sadly.

"So there is a *he* in the story?"

And then, with tears and blushes, with many pauses she tells her story, and when it is ended Herbert says gravely,—

"You have acted honestly, my dear, and that is well; because, had you married me, loving another man, there could have been nothing but misery for us both. Run away to your room; I will make your peace with uncle Berthold."

"Would you—would you very much mind kissing me?" she asks, wistfully, "as a sign that you forgive me?"

"There is very little to forgive; and what of blame there is attaches to Mr. Thornton, and not you." Then, made glad by his brotherly kiss, she moves to the door. There she pauses,—

"You are not very hurt, Herbert?"

"No, my dear;" and she goes to her room with a blissful sense of freedom. Towards one o'clock she hears her father return; then she hears Herbert join him, but she does not know until night what passes between them.

The young man faces his uncle,—

"I know what has occurred between Blake

and Melody, and I wish you to understand she is perfectly free."

"What! Are you fool enough to yield your rights to a coxcomb like Blake?"

"I'm not fool enough to take a wife against her will"—coolly—"and Blake isn't a bad sort of fellow."

"I don't wish my property to go out of the family. I hoped your wishes were as mine."

"It is a very great pity, uncle, that you thought so little of your daughter and so much of your estate. The poor child has not been considered in the least; and you can but acknowledge that from compulsory marriages spring misery and sin. I think no parent has a right to dispose of his child in such a heathenish way, and, frankly, *I will not marry Melody.*"

"It is curious you did not entertain these sentiments before," sneers Mr. Berthold. "Perhaps you have your own reasons for wishing your release."

"The last part of your sentence is too despicable to call for an answer," the young man says, frigidly. "To the first I reply, it is to my shame that ever I lent myself to such a contract." Then he turns upon his heel and goes out.

Melody is not allowed to leave her room, and yet when she peeps out and exchanges a few words with Herbert, as he passes, she does not seem very unhappy, and he can scarcely understand this. He does not know that a correspondence is established between the lovers, through the agency of Melody's maid, or his wonder would be considerably lessened. A week passes slowly by, and Herbert leaves Cumbergate, on account of the hostility between himself and his uncle, but he does not go to his own home; he takes apartments at Dreminster, and spends most of his time with his books, and always carefully avoids Gloucester House and its immediate vicinity. A night or two after his departure Mr. Bertold dines with the Rector, and a very short while after he has left his own home Melody opens her door, looks anxiously along the corridor and down the stairs.

"Now is your opportunity, miss," says the maid behind her; "I've got your things all safe in the bag. Hurry, hurry, or it may be too late."

"I am afraid," the girl answers, trembling greatly.

"Afraid, with such a handsome lover waiting for you!" She catches her mistress's hand, and half leads, half drags her downstairs, through the hall, past the wood, on to the high road, where a carriage is waiting them.

A man comes forward, eagerly,—"My love! my dear!"

"Oh! Thornton."

"You'd best leave talking till you're safely off," says the maid, almost pushing Melody into the carriage, and springing up beside the coachman, who drives rapidly, having received instructions from his master.

It is late at night when Mr. Berthold returns, and goes at once to his room.

No one comments on the maid's absence, because for the last week she has slept in Melody's room, and been almost always with her. It is not until the next day that Melody's note is found and carried to her father.

This is what the poor girl has written:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—I can't stay here and endure imprisonment and misery any longer. I am going away with the man who loves me, and with whom alone I can be happy. I would not have done this if you had allowed me any other course. I hope you will forgive me, and receive me on my return. Thornton wishes me to say he would rather take me without my fortune than with it. We are going to his aunt Mathieson's, from whose house I shall be married to-morrow. Dear, forgive me, because I love him so dearly.—Your little girl."

"MELODY."

CHAPTER V.

SILENCE reigns at Gloucester House. The "office" is closed.

Felix and Landor converse in low tones. The one maid goes disconsolately about her work. Poppy and her father are rarely seen, for in her room Mrs. Garnet lies dying. No one quite knows what ails her. The doctor calls it a breaking up of constitution, and has long ago told the husband it is useless to hope recovery. She has not been a very fond mother, and most certainly not a loving wife; but child and husband forgot all her shortcomings now, and vie with each other in ministering to her wants.

All Poppy's pretty colour has faded; her eyes are heavy with the night watches, and her dainty figure, once so round and—as Besant has it—"so cuddlesome," has grown slim and reed-like. The change in her had begun even before her mother's illness, and Felix feels that she has some trouble of which her friends know nothing, and which, he tells himself miserably, he has no power to remedy.

She is very patient now, this poor little Poppy, who once had been so impatient. Her voice is always weary, yet always gentle; but they all miss her bright sallies, her saucy ways, her joyous laugh.

It is a beautiful May morning—so mild that she has opened her mother's window, and the soft warm breeze plays about the dying woman's face and ruffles the thin waving hair about her brow. Her eyes are closed, and there is a look of intense sorrow about her tremulous lips. Suddenly she puts out one cold thin hand and lays it upon her daughter's.

"Poppy," she says, faintly.

"What is it, dear mamma?" the girl questions, bending over and kissing her.

"Do you ever think of Mr. Rithdale now?"

"Please don't, mamma!" beginning to tremble, for little things shake her now.

The dying eyes open upon the girl's sweet face, all aglow now.

"Did you love him, dear? Do you love him still?"

Poppy hides her face in the pillows.

"We will not talk of him, mamma; it is not just to Felix—my poor Felix."

"I have done you a great wrong; I cannot die with it unredressed. Where is your father? Tell him to crown all his goodness—his life-long goodness to me, by bringing Herbert Rithdale here. He told me yesterday he is still in Drewminster."

"Wait," says the girl, half believing she wanders; "wait until to-morrow, you will be stronger then, I hope."

"No, no, my day is nearly over," faintly; "let me have an hour of peace before I go. Send for Mr. Rithdale—and—and Felix."

In a little while Mr. Garnet returns with Herbert, who moves to the foot of the bed. Neither he nor Poppy look at each other, or exchange any greetings.

"Are you all here?" the faint voice questions. "Yes! Perhaps you will find it the less hard to forgive the wrong I did, because I am a dying woman."

Her husband sits at her right, holding her hand, Poppy on the left, and the two young men at the foot of the bed.

"I've not been a good wife—you must not interrupt me, Alfred—but all my petulance and complaints have been patiently borne by my dear husband. Now the end is so near I realise how good he has been to me, and how little I have deserved that goodness. I did not marry him because I loved him (I was honest enough to tell him that), but because I was afraid people would point to me as a disappointed and broken-hearted woman, knowing that I had loved and been cruelly deceived by a gentleman. When he grew tired of me, and said he had never intended more than a flirtation with me, I think that all there was in me of gentleness and womanliness was changed to bitterness and hatred of his class. So in a fit of pique I married my hus-

band; but oh! I have not made him happy—I have not done my duty to him—and I have been cruelly jealous of his love for Poppy."

"Mamma, dear, mamma dear!" cries the weeping girl; "spare yourself; do not hear up reproach upon reproach!"

"Hush," gently, "let me finish my story. When my girl was born," now addressing them collectively, "I vowed to keep her from the misery which had befallen me, and until last year I succeeded. Then Mr. Rithdale came amongst us sorely against my will, and all happened as I feared, which I had striven to prevent. He was attracted by Poppy's prettiness and dainty ways, and she—she learned to love him."

The girl flings herself upon her knees.

"Have pity, mamma!"

Herbert takes one forward step, then pauses, and Felix, groaning, hides his face.

"I watched them often when they thought they were alone, and pondered how I should part them. I thought Mr. Rithdale, being a gentleman, would soon forget, but I knew my child's heart better than to suppose she would change unless I taught her to believe him false. So I laboured to destroy their mutual trust. I saw Felix loved Poppy, and knowing his good heart I longed to see her safely married to him. I thought this would be easily accomplished when once the lovers were separated. The chance I prayed for soon came. Poppy went to spend a few hours with her godmother, and when she was gone I called Mr. Rithdale into the sitting-room, and with many expressions of pity told him I had reason to believe he loved my child. He interrupted me, saying he ought to have spoken to Mr. Garnet, and intended doing so, but he had waited, because at times from Poppy's manner he thought she did not return his love."

The girl still kneels with hidden face, and Herbert stands looking down miserably upon her.

"I said I much regretted to give him pain, but Poppy was only trifling with him, that she was already engaged to Felix, but owing to her youth her father would not allow it to be publicly known."

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" and then Poppy pauses, lest she shall reproach the dying woman.

"Let me end it quickly, I am growing faint. His pride rose at once, and he declared he would not stay in Drewminster another hour. I hastened his departure, because I feared if Poppy returned before he left an explanation might ensue, and my plan be frustrated. All succeeded as I wished, but I could not die with the memory of this lie upon my conscience. Poppy, forgive me? Oh! all of you forgive me, although I do not deserve so great a kindness at your hands?"

The girl lifts herself, and kisses the pallid face.

"Dear," she sobs, "you did all for my good, as you believed."

Then Herbert speaks.

"As Heaven is my judge, I freely forgive you; but," he mutters under his breath, "it is hard."

* * * *

Poppy steals out to the landing with him.

"Try to forget the bitter things I have said, and pardon the cruel thoughts I had of you? We can part friends now."

He looks at her with a world of agony in his eyes. "Must we part, knowing the truth? Oh, love! love!" and he stretches his hands to her.

With a little, low, bitter sob she shrinks back from him. But he is mad with love and grief, and catching her to his heart, holds her there, as if he will never let her go.

Neither speaks, for in this hour woe holds them silent. Her head is on his breast; her clinging hands about his neck. She feels the mad beating of his heart beneath her ear, and that, come what will, she shall love him to the end.

As usual, the woman is the first to speak.

"Say good-bye now. I am very weak. Help me to remember, Felix."

Then he lifts her face between his hands, and kisses the quivering lips.

Oh! hard that they should love each other so dearly, and yet must part.

"You will kiss me now—but once. Then I will go away and trouble you no more. Heaven help us; Heaven comfort you!

She kisses him tenderly, and the look of anguish in her lovely eyes almost breaks down his self-control.

"Good-bye," she says, and her voice sounds far away. "Heaven be with you in all your ways."

She draws gently from him; puts him away firmly, with white hands that do not tremble now.

Then he goes downstairs blindly, staggering like one drunk with much wine, and she creeps back to her mother's room and sits throughout the day, pale and patient, uncomplaining—ministering to the dying woman lovingly, untiringly.

And at night Mrs. Garnet's voice, now scarcely audible, pleads, "Kiss me, husband—Poppy," and so is silent for evermore.

* * * *

The funeral is over, and Poppy stands alone in the sitting-room, which looks so desolate, bereft of her mother's presence. She looks out from the window upon the fragrant, flower-filled garden, with wide, tearless, unseeing eyes.

Love and grief have combined together to rob her of brightness, to sap her strength, and steal the bloom from her beauty; and yet Felix, entering the room noiselessly, thinks her lovelier than in her happiest day.

He, too, is changed. There are curious little lines about his mouth and on his brow, and his eyes tell their own story of constant pain and constant conflict.

"Poppy!"—and at the sound of his kindly voice the girl turns to him, a faint welcoming smile upon her lips.

"I did not hear you enter, Felix."

He comes and stands beside her, puts an arm about her, and she has schooled herself so well to play her part that she does not shrink from him. She lifts her clear eyes to him, "What is it, Felix? Does papa want me?"

"No; but I do. It is time we understood each other, dear."

She begins to tremble, and her voice is not quite steady, as she says, "Tell me what you mean; if—if you have any cause for complaint I will try to remedy it. Felix, you *will* believe you are very dear to me, and I wish to do my duty towards you always."

"But you love Rithdale best?"

She drops her head.

"That feeling, too, I will strive to conquer. I am your promised wife, and I will not fail you. Perhaps—perhaps, when we are married, I shall love you as you deserve and as you wish."

"Then you are still ready to be my wife?" but there is no note of exultation in his voice.

"Yes, Felix;" and once again she is calm.

"When will you come to me? We need not wait until I have made a name; I have sufficient for our needs."

"I will come when you choose; I leave all things to you."

"Will you say this day month?"

"It is very early, but it shall be as you wish; and Heaven grant I may make you happy, because—because of your goodness."

"You have answered as I hoped you would." How husky his voice has grown; how white of face he is; how wild of eye! "It makes me a better man to know how noble a woman I have loved; but Poppy—Poppy, I will not let you sacrifice yourself; now and here I give you back your promise. You are free—free to bless him with your love."

"Felix," she cries out, "oh! my dear, you forget yourself."

"It is my joy to lose myself in you; we are once more friends only; but kiss me once, for

dear love's sake, and because as yet my heart is very sore."

She lays her soft cheek to his; she has never loved or honoured him so well as now; he feels her tears, he hears her sighs, and tries to speak cheerfully for her sake.

"The day will come, my dear, when I shall remember this hour painlessly, when I shall be glad—I set you free; and my life is too full of work to be spoiled by vain regrets," and so with a kiss he leaves her.

She sinks upon the couch, and covering her face, weeps pitying tears for him; she is so full of grief for his grief that she does not think what freedom means for her.

Once more the door is opened, and this time the voice which speaks her name thrills her, drives all her body's blood to her heart. Herbert goes to her, kneels beside the couch, and gently drawing her hands from her face, kisses her.

"Dear!" he says, "Felix has sent me to you. I cannot yet say all that is in my heart, because it seems hard his loss should be my gain, that the foundations of my happiness must be laid upon his misery. But you will believe now I love you, that all my hardness was assumed, to hide my too great passion for you, and because I thought you so very—very false. I was to blame; I should have stayed, and questioned you as to the truth of what I heard; but my pride and my love alike were sorely wounded."

"Oh! say no more of that dreadful time," Poppy cries, and her arms steal about his neck, her soft cheek is pressed to his. "Herbert," she whispers, coyly, as if she finds it strange to address him so familiarly, "are you quite—quite sure you won't be sorry for this one day?"

"Sorry! Ah, love!" catching her closer, "I shall be glad, to the end of my life, that you have given yourself to me."

"But I am not your equal, and once you said it is foolish for a man to marry out of his own rank."

"So it is, as a rule, but not when the woman is refined, and beautiful, and as good as she is beautiful."

She blushes brightly. "Don't flatter me," she says; then adds wistfully, "Poor—poor Felix! I feel as though I have sinned against him."

"And I too. His honest sad, face will haunt me always, and be the one cloud over my happiness."

Later on the girl steals into the "office." Felix is sitting, with his head between his hands, in an attitude of despondency; she pauses beside him.

"Dear Felix," she says, softly, and hearing her voice he looks up, smiling faintly, "it makes me wretched, to know I have brought trouble upon you who have always been more good to me than I deserve." The tears stand in her lovely eyes, and seeing this, the young man clasps her hands in his.

"Do not fret about that," he answers, his honest face flushing, and his voice a little husky. "I shall live it down; and if you will always give me your friendship I shall be a proud and happy man. Dear, when he has raised you to his own rank don't quite forget one whose proudest hour will be that in which he can do you a service!"

"Oh! my friend, my brother," kneeling at his feet, her sweet face uplifted to his, "we shall forget you only when life is ended, and never—never cease to lament that our joy is your pain."

* * * * *

Five years have come and gone, bringing with them many changes. Melody, as beautiful and gentle as in the early days of her girlhood, reigns at "The Hollow" supreme; the idol of her husband, the dear playfellow, companion, and comforter of her two children. Through Herbert's efforts a reconciliation was effected between herself and her father almost immediately after her return to Cumbertgate; and when her first child was born Mr.

Berthold evinced a pride in and a love for her which was as delightful as it was new.

Poppy's "lines" have, indeed, "fallen in pleasant places," for her husband is her lover still, and both in country and town pretty Mrs. Rithdale is liked and admired. Her talent is the talk of society, for she has written a very clever book on architecture, in which labour her father gave his willing help, and Herbert is not a little proud of the name she has made for herself. When they were married he begged Mr. Garnet to share their home, but he replied, "No; I could not be happy away from the 'office,' but I shall be glad to visit you now and again." So he and Felix, with Edward Landor, lived on at the old house, not unhappily, although they missed Poppy's bright presence sorely. Just one closing scene, and then the story is told.

A merry party at a country house. Thornton and Melody Blake; with their young hopefuls; Herbert, Poppy, and the son and heir, "Felix," who is surely the most wonderful child in Christendom; Messieurs Berthold and Garnet.

The grown-up folks are laughingly watching the gambols of the children upon the level lawn; a figure appears in the distance, and Master Felix rushes forward with a shout; "Uncoo Felix—Uncoo Felix!" Eyre catches him up, tosses him high in the air, then putting him down again crosses to Herbert and Poppy.

"Wish me joy," he says, "I have persuaded Daisy White to be my wife, and am as happy as any man can be, and live."

"Oh, Felix, I am so glad—we are so glad;" and with joyous laugh he clasps the wife's right and the husband's left hand in his; and Herbert says, "Heaven grant, dear friend, your happiness may be as complete and lasting as mine;" and Poppy looks up into those dear brown eyes with a sigh of satisfied love.

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

A CHILLY operation is kissing a lady on her snowy brow.

A LAW student once defined libel as "something a man says, and afterwards wishes to goodness he hadn't."

WHEN the young wife of a butcher asks her husband to write her a letter, can the request be called an order for "tender lines?"

A WOMAN set a speckled hen on a dried apple pie, and in three weeks the hen hatched four tiny nightmares with blue ribbons on their tails.

A SURPRISE PARTY.—"Your conduct surprises me!" exclaimed the good old farmer, when he caught a neighbour's boy robbing his apple orchard. "No more than your appearance surprises me," replied the incorrigible youth, as he hastily departed.

An urchin, not quite three years old, said to his sister, while munching a piece of gingerbread: "Siss, take half of dis cake to keep to afternoon, when I get cross." This is nearly as good as the story of the child who bellowed from the top of the stairs: "Ma, Hannah won't pacify me!"

"In your sermon this morning I heard something that I never heard in any sermon before," said the deacon's widow to a clergyman who had tried the patience of his congregation to the utmost. "And pray what was that, my dear madam?" inquired the minister, highly flattered. "I heard the clock strike the hour twice."

His speech betrayed him. "You are not an Englishman?" the lady asked the tramp, who was suppressing cold vittuals at the kitching door. "No'm," he replied, with a grateful mouth. "You look like a foreigner," she continued. "Yeap," he responded, in a voice choked with a motion of his elbow. "What are you?" she inquired. "Feed ye islander," he muttered, hoarsely; and then she knew he was a member of the Press Club.

Doctors say drinking too much coffee makes bald heads. Telling the female head of the house that her coffee is "nothing but slops" will also do it.

"WHAT does this mean?" asked a scholar, who had been scanning some lines written by a friend. "Oh," said another, "it doesn't mean anything. It is poetry."

"A HARMONIOUS colour gives a feeling of repose in the home," says an art journal. Therefore if you have a red-headed wife, furnish your house in the same tint.

Who wrote the most—Dickens, Warren, or Bulwer? Warren wrote "Now and Then"; Bulwer wrote "Night and Morning"; and Dickens wrote "All the Year Round."

"Yes, sir, I desire to buy a house in the country," said the broker. "I am sure mine will suit you," answered his caller. "It has a beautiful situation right on the margin of a lake, and—" "That's enough. I don't want it. I will not buy anything on margin these times," emphatically said the broker.

A poor agent went into a barbershop and asked the proprietor if he could sell him an encyclopedia. "What is it like?" asked the barber. "It is a book that contains exhaustive information upon every subject in the world." "No," said the barber, with an injured air, "I don't need it."

"WHAT is it, my friends," cried the temperance lecturer, glaring ferociously around him, "what is it that causes men to desert their firesides, break up happy homes, and bring endless misery to all the human race? what is it?" "The Inventories," responded the theatrical manager.

ANSWERING WITH CALMNESS AND LIKES A PHILOSOPHER.—A very vigorous old fellow who had lately buried his fourth wife was accosted by an acquaintance, who, unaware of his bereavement, asked: "How is your wife, Cap'n Plowjogger?" To which the captain replied, with a perfectly grave face: "Waal, to tell ye the treuth, I'm kinder out of wives just now."

DRIED TONGUE.—"What have you in that package?" was the question put to a clergyman on a Saturday afternoon, some years ago as he sat in the station awaiting the arrival of a train. "Dried tongue," was the laconic reply. It seemed that the divine was on the way to a neighbouring town to exchange with a clerical brother, and was to preach two old sermons.

A DONKEY.—Tommy had been looking at Augustus for some time in silence. Suddenly he broke out: "Are you four feet tall, Mr. Twemly?" "Yaa, I think I am, little fellah," answered Gussie. "Well let me see your ears, Mr. Twemly." "Why, what do you mean, you little rascal?" said Gussie. "Pa said you was a donkey, and I asked Katie what a donkey was, and she said it was a four-footed long-eared animal—You let me alone, 'Liza Jane."

"Look here, Matilda," said a lady to the coloured cook, "you sleep right close to the chicken house, and you must have heard those thieves stealing the chickens." "Yes, ma'm, I heerd the chickens holler, and I heerd the voices ob de men." "Why didn't you go out then?" "Case, m'm," bursting into tears, "I knowed my old fodder was out there, and I wouldn't hab him know that I'd lost confidence in him for all the chickens he could steal in a whole yeah."—*American Paper*.

"Yes, ladies and gentlemen," the mesmerist said, "as I remarked before, I now have the gentleman completely at my mercy. To prove it I will feed him with a red-pepper pod, and he will smack his lips and think it is sweetmeat." And the mesmerist gave it to the subject, who bit it in two and commenced chewing a portion of it, when all at once he hauled off and mesmerised the mesmeriser so much that it took four men and a bucket of water to bring him to. The subject remarked that no man could take him for a kitchner to try to light a fire in him.

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES wore at the second State Ball a dress of cream satin duchesse embroidered in silver, and veiled in crêpe lisse; corsage to correspond; headdress, a tiara of diamonds; pearls and diamonds; the Victoria and Albert, the Crown of Indis, St. Catherine of Russia, and the Danish Family Orders.

THE PRINCESS LOUISE OF WALES wore a very pretty toilette of white poul-de-soie, trimmed with bunches of lilies-of-the-valley over a lovely jupe of white tulle in plisses strewed with lilies-of-the-valley to correspond; pearls, sapphires, and diamonds, and the Victoria and Albert Orders.

THE DUKE OF ARGYLL has consented to open the Armitstead course of lectures in Dundee for 1885. The subject of his grace's lecture will be "The connection between the scenery of Scotland and its geology."

THE EMPRESS EUGENIE will shortly leave England for Carlsbad, whence after taking a course of the waters, she intends to visit her charming villa at Arenenberg on the Unter See, near Constance.

THE QUEEN'S tame deer, which was a great favourite of Her Majesty's, and which had a strap and silver collar round its neck when it disappeared from the grounds of Balmoral recently, has not yet been discovered, although a reward has been offered for its recovery.

THE BOROUGH OF NEWPORT, Isle of Wight, will present the Princess Beatrice, on the occasion of her marriage, with an address and an edition de luxe of the works of Shakespeare in an ornamental cabinet. Her Majesty, through Sir Henry Ponsonby, has appointed that the Princess shall accept this offering a few days before the wedding take place.

THE PRINCESS BEATRICE's wedding-dress, says a usually well-informed contemporary, is made of the very richest duchesse satin, draped with the same lace in which the Queen was married to the Prince Consort. It was made at Honiton, and the Royal crown is introduced into the pattern. The front of the dress has a deep satin kiltling, over which is a fringe of orange blossom buds falling on to the kiltling; above this is draped the lace. Her Majesty has lent for the occasion to the bride. The back of the dress is a plain train of satin, the edge hemmed over wadding, with lace on the wrong side, which is not visible from the outside. The lace on the dress is caught up with bunches of orange blossom, and on the left side is a panel formed of the same flower. The white satin bodice is low, and pointed back and front. The short sleeves are lace, draped to the shoulder; more lace is laid round the top of the bodice, with a garland of orange blossom, a few tufts of white heather resting in the front. The veil matches the lace on the gown.

The marriage of Mr. George Stuart Gunnis, of Gordonbush, Sutherland, with Miss Josephine Mary Fitzgerald, eldest daughter of Lord Fitzgerald, of Kilmarnock, at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Chelsea, was a very grand affair. The bridegroom was attended by Mr. Frank Gunnis, his brother, an best man, and the bridesmaids were Misses Geraldine, Esme, Gertrude, and Muriel Fitzgerald, sisters of the bride; Miss Gunnis, sister of the bridegroom; and Miss Wood, cousin of the bride.

They were dressed in white muslin trimmed with valenciennes lace, and wore long tulle veils. The bridegroom presented each with a diamond swallow brooch and a bouquet of white flowers.

The bride, who was conducted to the altar by her father, who gave her away, was attired in rich ivory-white satin duchesse, the front of the skirt being embroidered in pearls. She wore a few sprays of orange blossom in her hair and a Brussels lace veil fastened with diamond stars, the bridegroom's gift.

STATISTICS.

FISH CONVEYED BY RAILWAY.—The quantity of fish conveyed inland by railway from English fishing ports in 1884 amounted to 248,678 tons, compared with 215,486 in the preceding year. The respective quantities in Scotland were 68,738 and 66,117, and in Ireland 7,638 and 8,565.

THE IRISH CRIMES ACT.—Official returns show how mercifully the Act was administered, and how rarely its severer penalties were enforced. 950 persons were prosecuted under it for intimidation up till the end of last year, and of these 380 were discharged and 570 convicted. 240 of those convicted were sentenced to a month's imprisonment, 140 to periods varying from one to four months, while only 157 received the maximum punishment of six months. The others were simply put under a rule of bail. Ireland, for peculiar reasons, is always the scene of more or less agrarian inquietude, but in her normal condition offences of this character fell considerably below an annual average of 300, and it is to be remembered that this estimate includes any intimation in the nature of a threat that may be reported to the police. In 1882, owing to causes that it is unnecessary to recall, these crimes reached the astounding total of over 3,000. Last year this total declined to 700, and for the first quarter of the present year only 168 offences were reported to the constabulary, ninety-five of these being for intimidation.

GEMS.

A MAN cannot have an idea of perfection in another which he was never sensible of himself.

He who strives after a long and pleasant term of life must seek to attain continual equanimity.

INNOCENCE is like a flower which withers when touched; and blooms not again, though watered with tears.

LIFE'S real heroes and heroines are those who bears their own burdens bravely and give a helping hand to those around them.

"WEALTH," says Dr. Holmes, "is a steep hill which the father climbs slowly, and which the son often tumbles down precipitately."

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BATTER PUDDING.—One pint of sour milk, one teaspoonful of salt, flour enough to make it a stiff cake; one teaspoonful of soda, or more, as it may require. Can be made with or without fruit. If made with fruit, one-half of the batter should be put into the pan, then the fruit, and the remaining portion of the batter. Steam one hour.

APPLE DUMPLINGS.—Pare and scoop out the cores of six large baking apples; put part of a clove and a little grated lemon peel inside of each, and inclose them in pieces of puff paste; boil them in nets for the purpose, or bits of linen, for an hour. Before serving, cut off a small bit from the top of each, and put in a teaspoonful of sugar, and a bit of fresh butter. Replace the bit of paste, and strew over them powdered loaf sugar.

CHOCOLATE CANDIES.—Two cups of sugar, one of treacle, one of milk, one spoonful of butter, one of flour, and half a pound of chocolate. Butter your saucepan; put in sugar, treacle, and milk; boil fifteen minutes; add flour and butter; stirred to a cream, and allow to boil fifteen minutes; then add the chocolate, grated, and boil till thick; butter tin flat pans and pour in the mixture, half an inch thick, and then mark it in squares before it gets hard in cooling.

MISCELLANEOUS.

PIPE AND FAN.—The bowl of the pipe used by Japanese smokers is hardly as large as a thimble, and the pipe is exhausted in three or four whiffs. No Japanese costume seems to be complete without a fan. Soldiers, civilians, and women alike carry them—in fact, no one possessing the slightest claim to respectability would be seen without one. The fans are about a foot long, and often supply the place of memorandum books.

THE SALT LAKE.—A bather can lie on the surface of the water of the great Salt Lake without exertion. Or, by passing a towel under his knees and holding the two ends, he can remain in any depth of water kneeling, with the head and shoulders out of the water; or, by shifting it under the soles of the feet, he can sit on the water. The one exertion, in fact, is to keep one's balance; none whatever is required to keep afloat.

The great ocean is in a constant state of evaporation. It gives back what it receives, and sends up its waters in mists to gather into clouds; and so there are rain on the field and storm on the mountains, and greenness and beauty everywhere. But there are many men who do not believe in evaporation. They get all they can and keep all they get, and so are not fertilizers, but only stagnant mischievous ponds.

OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE.—This world is not made for a tomb, but a garden. You are to be a seed, not a death. Plant yourself, and you will sprout; bury yourself, and you can only decay. For a dead opportunity there is no resurrection. The only enjoyment, the only use to be attained in this world must be attained on the wing. Each day brings its own benefit, but it has none to spare. What escapes to-day is escaped for ever. To-morrow has no overflow to attain for the lost yesterday.

A NEW IDEA.—The newest way of utilizing bamboo hand-screens is to make them into hanging, wall pincushions, by fixing on a cushion of coloured satin, shaped to the screen, with a fall of lace depending from it, and lightly tacked to the edge of the bamboo. A large bow is tied to the handle and a loop is placed behind it to hang it up to any nail. Another way is to cover it with black or coffee, coloured lace put on full, and fasten a stuffed bird with outstretched wings in the centre. Drawn lace or muslin over red Turkey twill, or orange-coloured, light blue or bright pink-glazed lining, with a butterfly bow at the handle and another at the opposite corner, are pretty for bedrooms; and in addition to the pocket, where spills, a handkerchief or letter can be kept, a diamond-shaped pincushion fashioned near the bow at the handle. Artificial flowers can be used up by being pulled out and arranged on these screens in the midst of satin ribbon or lace.

A FORTUNE FROM A FLOWER.—The gorgeous dahlias which so brilliantly ornament the gardens at this time, and are so effectively used in decorations, are of Mexican origin. They were first introduced into Germany by Dahl, their name was then "Bidens Magnifica"; afterwards they were called dahlias, in honour of the man who found them. They were, when discovered, quite single, having only one ray of petals above a golden disc; the colours were scarlet, yellow and white, the latter being distinct from the others, having smaller flowers, and being of a dwarf habit, with leaves much divided and fern-like in character. The English were the first to attempt the doubling of the dahlia, which was prized by royalty, and so jealously guarded that those in charge of them were sworn to secrecy as to their cultivation; it was considered a great privilege even to see them growing. In a few years semi-doubled flowers appeared, and ultimately the perfect double dahlia was obtained, which sold for five guineas a plant. One grower netted twenty-six thousand pounds in two years from his crop.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

EMIL.—January 3rd, 1865, fell on a Friday.

MARY.—We strongly advise you to get a testimonial before you leave.

HOUSEWIFE.—From May to the end of January is the time in which plaise is in season.

LIMERICK.—The best remedy would be to purchase a filter.

ANNABEL.—Only now found in the environs of Damiette and on the banks of Lake Minzale.

CHESSMAN.—The red double pink signifies "pure and ardent love."

LUCY.—We are sorry you allow such a small defect to prey upon your mind.

HISTORIAN.—July, 1588, was the date in which the Armada arrived in the British Channel.

JACKY.—"Crânce" was a term used in falconry, and means a string to which hawks were fastened during their first lessons.

CONSTANT READER (Dalkeith).—Write to the Commander-in-Chief, Horse Guards, Whitehall. Every information will at once be given.

J. F.—1. Prepared chalk is the simplest and best dentifrice. 2. Not if used in moderation. 3. Use them as little as possible at night. 4. We should prefer Barnard Smith's, published by Macmillan and Co.

T. M. W.—Declare your love like a man, and ask the young lady to become your wife. This will be the most agreeable and honourable mode of proceeding. Nothing wins like a declaration of love and offer of marriage.

STUDENT.—Probably the cause of your invariably falling asleep when studying is that you choose wrong hours—either directly after a meal or at the end of the day, when the body and mind are exhausted.

HUGO.—Two drachms of diluted sulphuric acid, one drachm of tincture of myrrh, and four ounces of spring water, mixed, will whiten the nails. Previously cleanse them with white soap, and dip them into the mixture.

R. D. A.—The Greeks were an unusually fine race of people to begin with, and they paid a vast deal more attention to physical culture than any nation does now. So it is not unreasonable to suppose that they excelled the moderns in physical prowess.

ROSE-COLOURED.—"Monomania" signifies a madness upon one point. It is a great pity you were ignorant of the meaning of the word, as you might have been able to give a suitable answer that would have, vulgarly speaking, "shut him up" for the rest of the journey.

C. G. L.—You have got along pretty well now for thirty-eight years as a bachelor, and seem very well satisfied with yourself, so we advise you not to change your condition until you are sure that you have found the right woman. It is a risky thing to wait to fall in love until after marriage.

DAISY.—1. The proper expression is, "There are many people." The plural verb must be used when more than one person is meant, except in a collective sense when spoken of as a body such as "assembly," "Parliament," etc., when the singular may be employed. 2. Yes, unless used under medical advice. 3. Quite good enough.

L. H. H.—Do not be discouraged. A little age and experience will enable you to overcome these defects. Go into ladies' company whenever opportunity offers. It is the society of good women that makes gentlemen. The young lady perceives your better qualities, and merely amuses herself in ridiculing your superficial deficiencies. You must strive to gain self-control and composure.

L. V. P.—You probably refer to lines in Scott's "Lord of the Isles." In the fifth canto of that poem the following passage occurs:

"O, many a shaft, at random sent,

Finds mark the archer little meant!

And many a word, at random spoken,

May soothe, or wound, a heart that's broken."

META P.—1. No formula of practical value to one who has not the facilities for making it. 2. A very hard and durable varnish is made as follows: Amber, one pound; pale boiled oil, ten ounces; turpentine, one pint. Render the amber, placed in an iron pot, semi-liquid by heat; then add the oil, mix, remove it from the fire, and, when cooled a little, stir in the turpentine.

W. S. T.—1. The first congratulations should be offered by the immediate relatives who happens to be nearest to the bride. 2. An only sister need not stand upon ceremony. She should express her happiness in her sister's happiness, and wish her joy at the first opportunity after the ceremony. 3. It is the duty of the host and hostess to introduce guests to the bride and bridegroom.

D. C. S.—There are about 1,000 described species of serpents, or snakes, widely distributed over the world especially in the warmer regions. No nest is made by the female serpent; there is no incubation (except in the python) by the heat of the body, no food is stored up for the young, and no education or parental care is necessary. The mother hides the eggs in a suitable place, and leaves them to be hatched by the heat of the sun and air. Sometimes the young are brought to maturity in the mother's body, as in the vipers. The eggs, which have soft, thin shells, are usually in a kind of chain, stuck together with a gummy substance. In

a serpent that was cut open there were found six eggs, each of the size of a goose egg, but longer and more pointed. Each of these eggs contained from thirteen to fifteen young ones, about six inches long, and as thick as a goose quill. The little animals were no sooner let loose from the shell than they crept about, and put themselves in a threatening posture, coiling themselves up, and biting the stick used to destroy them. In this manner seventy-four were killed, notwithstanding all in one of the eggs that were burst open made their escape in the bushes near the place where the serpent was killed.

FLO.—1. The lady should bow first. 2. Hair, nut-brown.

QUIX.—A Prime Minister as such does not receive any pension.

EDILE.—Only at the British Museum, unless you care to advertise. They would probably be very expensive.

JEANNE.—There are several advertised. Consult the daily papers.

R. C. J.—1 and 2. There are several varieties. 3. Lipia laevigata. It is a bright blue.

N. B.—Queen Victoria was married on 10th February, 1840.

Ross.—It is possible, but difficult. Apply to the Orthopaedic Hospital in Oxford-street.

A. G. W. (Penzance).—1. Personally we prefer Pitman's. 2. Neat, but the letters are very well formed. Practise from some good copies.

A PENSIONER.—Apply at the Horse Guards or the Admiralty, according as he is in the Army or Navy, stating full particulars.

THE BEST IN THE WORLD.

"I made no mistake," said a dear little woman, "With hair like the sunshine by sweet nature curled ; My heart it was tender, my heart it was human ; I married the man I loved best in the world.

"And what was far better than gold and rich treasure, Far better than station, than fortune or fame, He gave to me freely, with no stint or measure, A wealth of true love when he gave me his name."

I thought as I looked at this wise little charmer, And stooped over the cradle a babe's cheek to kiss, How glad and how happy must be the young father, Who had such a wife—such a household, as this.

And then I bethought me of many a dwelling, With just such dear households all over the land, Where love is the keynote, true love freely welling From founts that some natures can ne'er understand.

I should no mistake, this dear, brave little woman, With hair like the sunshine, that nature had curled, Her heart it was tender—her heart it was human, She married the man she loved best in the world.

M. A. K.

MEPHISTOCOLES.—The Esquire should come last. The name should be written John Smith (jun.) Esq., or (sen.) Esq., as the case may be.

COMMODORE A. K.—1. The 25th January, 1807, came on a Friday. 2. Leave him severely alone. If he really loves you, he will soon be at your feet again.

G. V. N.—Marriage under an assumed name is legal, although it is unusual and unwise. All that is necessary to prove its legality is the proper identification of the parties.

A. H.—You are probably both too young to marry, and like children ready to quarrel about trifles. Postpone your love affairs for a couple of years.

C. G. H.—Propose to the young lady at once, and urge your suit with ardour. The quicker the wedding-day is fixed the more secure you will be of happiness.

G. G.—They arise from various causes. Try some alternative medicine and plenty of exercise. Avoid fat and greasy food.

D. V. H.—The conversation is written out and punctuated as it appears in the printed book or newspaper. Each speaker's remarks are given in a paragraph.

STRANGER.—There are offices in every district. The cost would be about ten shillings. One of the parties must have resided in the district for fifteen days.

MADELINE GRANT.—1. Wash it frequently and use a little soda in the water. 2. Do not use it. 3. Squeeze them out and bathe in diluted spirits of wine. 4. Yes, but do not write so close together.

E. D.—If she has not heard or seen of her husband for more than seven years she could not be prosecuted for bigamy if she married again, but if the first husband turned up again he could claim her as his lawful wife, and the second marriage would be invalidated.

LEILA.—1. The only correct way is to behave as modestly and kindly to him as you can, and make yourself generally attractive without appearing bold or forward. Men as a rule run after the women who don't run after them. 2. About the right age.

G. H. D.—Ask him to explain what he means by it being "a matter between love and duty." Perhaps in attempting to explain it, he will find there is nothing in it, and return to his allegiance. If he does not, then let him go, and accept the attentions of other gentlemen.

A. H. W.—For squamous ointment use one gill plaster Paris, one gill litharge, one gill fine white sand, one-third gill resin finely powdered. Mix thoroughly dry. Take what may be required for immediate use, and make a putty with boiled tinned oil and a little drier. Not too soft. Apply at once, as it sets quickly.

FAIR LILLIE.—1. The address could only be found in a local directory. 2. We decline to give any recipe to make you pale. You must not take arsenic, except under the advice of a properly-qualified medical man. It is a deadly poison. 3. Leave off smoking cigarettes. It cannot do a girl of seventeen any good, and is fast and unadulterated.

FATTIE (Slough).—1. Large handwriting is fashionable for ladies. 2. Hair, bright brown. 3. Millord means "peaceful." Rhoda "like a rose." Amy "lovable." 4. Decidedly too young. Wait two or three years; you will then know your own mind. 4. The Queen has properly no surname, but her family name is D'Este-Guelph. Her husband's family name was Watson.

A. C. H.—More than two hundred years ago, Holland used the verb "to exaugurate," meaning "to calculate," "to unhallow," and also the corresponding noun, "exauguration," so that your friend cannot claim the credit of having invented a new word. As the words are derived directly from the Latin verb "exaugurare," their etymology is as defensible as that of "inaugurate," but as the words have had a trial, and have been rejected, it is not worth while to try to introduce them again.

L. S. S.—1. When the peninsula now known as Lower California was discovered in 1543, the name "California" was applied to it, and for more than two hundred years that was the California known to Europeans, although the name was also extended to the coast farther north. In 1542 the present State of California was seen for the first time by a white man, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese navigator in the service of Spain. In 1699 a party of Franciscan friars, under the command of Juniper Serra, came from the peninsula and established missions for the conversion of the Indians, and thus made a permanent white settlement. From this time the country north of San Diego was called Alta (Upper) or New California, while the peninsula was still styled Old or Lower California. In 1821 California became a portion of independent Mexico, and afterwards a territory under republican government. On July 7, 1846, the American Navy seized Monterey, the capital of Upper California. On Jan. 19, 1848, the gold mines of the Sierra Nevada were discovered, it is said, by James W. Marshall, an American, and a month later Upper California was by treaty ceded to the United States. 2. The first ocean steamer arrived at San Francisco on March 31, 1849. 3. California was numbered among the United States of America on Sept. 9, 1850.

CONNIE S.—Though the moon sheds light on the earth she does not give any herself, but only reflects on us a part of the light of the sun, which shines on her as she moves in her orbit. The earth does the same for the moon. If you could stand on the moon you would see the earth hanging like a balloon in the heavens, and shining with a silvery light, just as the moon looks to us at night. It would be sometimes crescent-shaped and sometimes round, just as the moon is, but it would be about thirteen times as large as the moon. The reason why we do not see all the moon, but only a part of it, much of the time, is this: When it is at a certain point it is between the earth and the sun, and the sun shines only on the side of the moon which is towards itself. In other words, if the earth is directly between the sun and the sun, we see all of it; if it is midway between these positions, we see half of it. In looking at the moon we always see the same things; therefore it is known that we can see only one side of her, the other side being always turned from us. As she rolls round the earth once every month, she herself must also turn round once in just the same time, or else we should be able to see all sides of her. To illustrate this, place your hands on a post and go round it, keeping your face to the post all the time. You will see that you yourself turn round once each time you go round the post. So the moon turns round once each time that she rolls round the earth and thus always keeps the same face toward us. As the turning round of the earth makes the day on the earth, so the turning round of the moon makes the day in the moon; and as it takes the moon nearly a month to turn round once, so its days are each nearly a month long—that is, the sun shines there for about fourteen of our days, and then it is dark for about the same length of time.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 27, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. XIX., bound in cloth, 1s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 224, Strand, W.C.

* * * We can at underrate to return rejected manuscripts.

London : Published for the Proprietor, at 224, Strand, by J. R. Speck, and Printed by Woodfall and Kinder, Millbank Lane, Strand.

